

NEW
FURROWS

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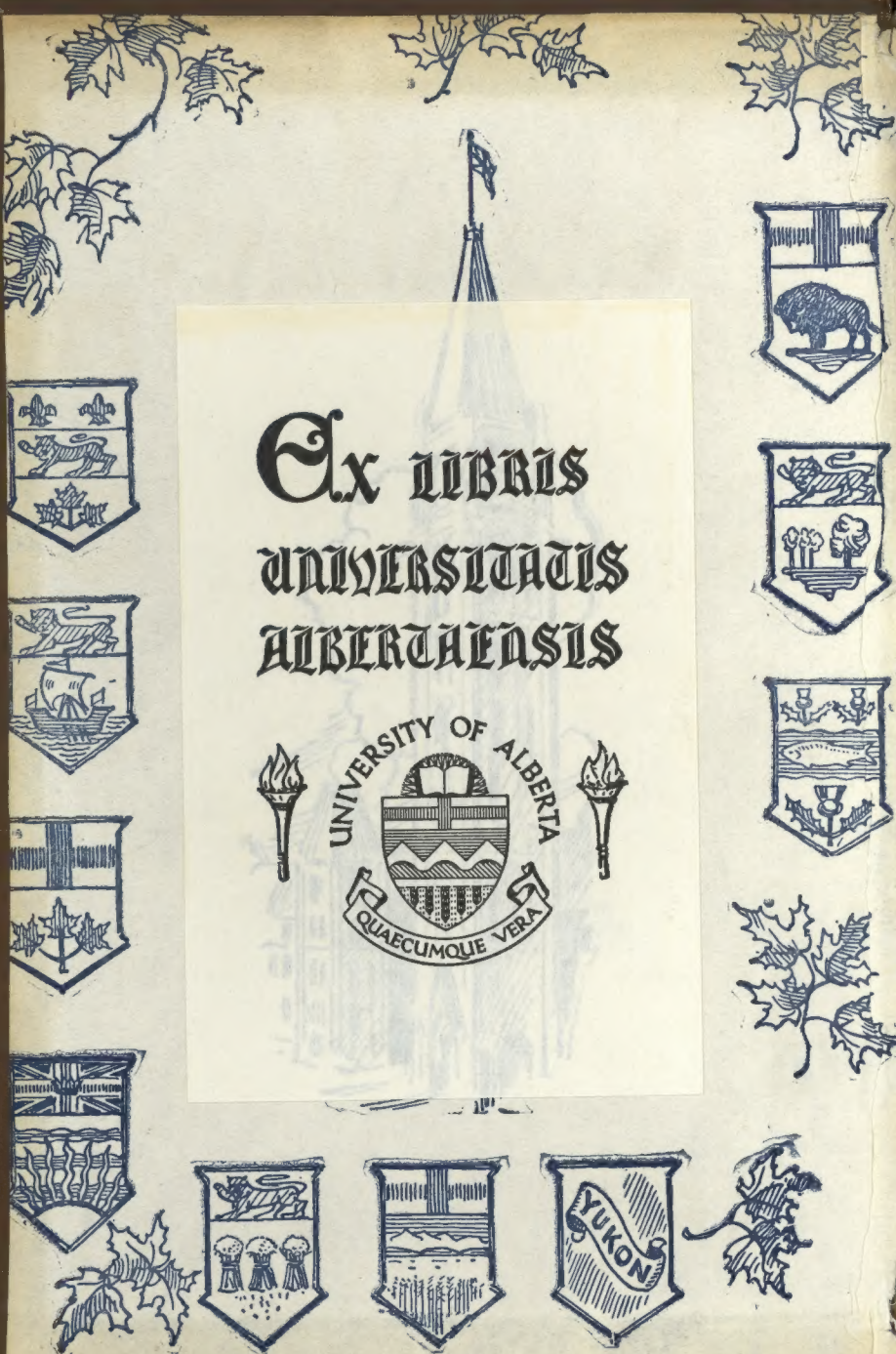
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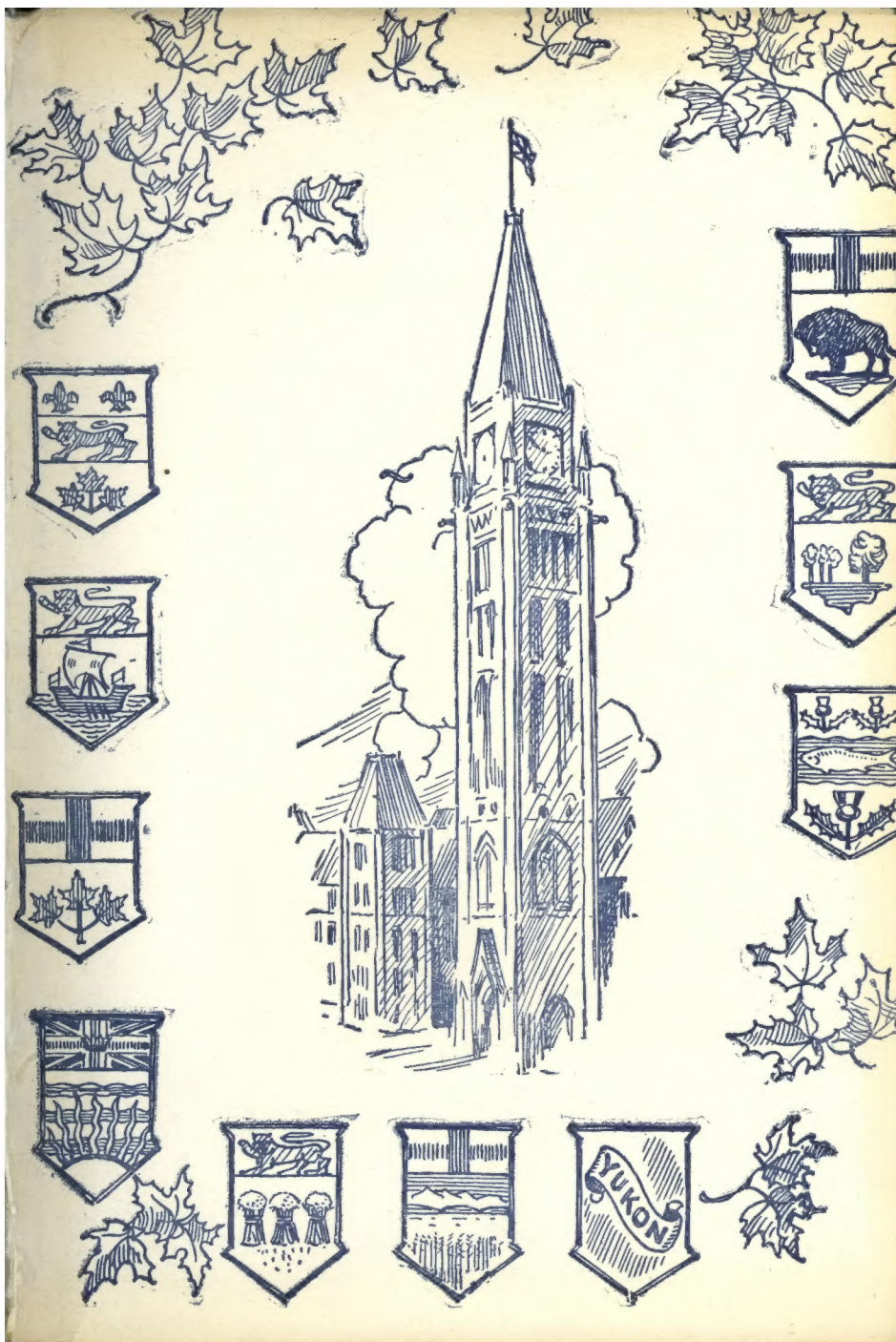
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NEW FURROWS
FLOS JEWELL WILLIAMS

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FLOS JEWELL WILLIAMS

Calgary, Alta.

Flos Jewell Williams, the authoress of NEW FURROWS, was born and educated in Toronto, where she attended Jarvis Street Collegiate Institute and Toronto Normal School. After graduating from the latter she taught school for some time in Toronto.

After her marriage to David S. Williams, they went west where her husband is one of the best-known "Knights of the Grip" in the Prairie Provinces.

In this delightful story of Alberta farm and city life, Mrs. Williams has taken as the central character a Belgian immigrant girl and places her and her parents, with their other children, on a homestead in the Alberta foothills. The struggles the family have in making the homestead into a farm; their tragedy when they are hailed out; their trials during the winter months; the insanity of the father; Marie's love affair with all its misunderstandings; her unfortunate marriage; the birth and death of her child; and the final straightening out of all the tangles forms one of the most absorbing books you have ever read.



NEW FURROWS

*A STORY OF
THE ALBERTA FOOTHILLS*

By
FLOS JEWELL WILLIAMS

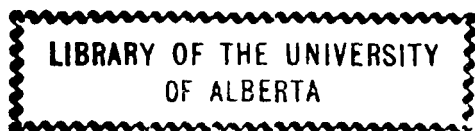
Author of
THE JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON



THE
LAURENTIAN PRESS SYNDICATE
OTTAWA, CANADA

ARMS
PROVINCE OF ALBERTA





New Furrows

*A Story of the Alberta Foothills
in Two Parts*



PART ONE / / / IN THE COUNTRY

PART TWO / / / / IN THE CITY

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To
David Williams

PART ONE



IN THE COUNTRY

NEW FURROWS

Part One—In the Country

MARIE paused at the edge of the meadow, gazing with beauty-brooding blue eyes at the little stream creeping sleepily along its boundary. The cows, knee deep in water, flicked lazy tails, and turned to gaze at her with great, imploring eyes, as if begging not to be taken away on the hated raft from this lush meadow. The sunlight shimmered over grass and vivid poppies. Almost breathless, the girl drank in the peace and loveliness before her. It flashed upon her consciousness that this was one of the pictures in life she would never forget. Blue sky and golden sunlight, scarlet poppies and green grass, and the heavy cows against the background of river, shore and sky. This, she thought, was Belgium, her own familiar Belgium! Why, then, this sharp awareness of a beauty seen daily? The young girl knew that in some way it was related to the atmosphere of suppressed excitement in her home, which she was so bitterly resenting. Unusual events were pending. Of that there could be no doubt

Did her parents think her a child, then, that they would tell her nothing? True, her years numbered only sixteen, but she worked early and late helping her mother raise the brood of six children, all younger than herself, raking hay, preparing meals, listening to her mother's eternal complaints against her father. For days now, the sense of change had clung about their tiny home. The night before, her father's eager whisperings, her mother's oft-repeated, "No, no, it is a plot, a plot. Fool, I say, fool!"—had disturbed Marie's sleep, as their heavy snoring had never done. And now, to-day, the amazing announcement that they were to have supper with Aunt and Uncle Fourchette! Uncle Fourchette, the great, the rich; Uncle Fourchette who owned a herd of cows, and had a big milk route. Uncle Fourchette, who owned all the property about, except the house and bit of land on which they themselves lived. How her father and his neighbours hated the man who had robbed his only brother of his property. How they humbled themselves before him, and did him homage because he owned that land!

And now they were to sup with these great people. What had come over her father that he should be going to the home of this hated brother, whose fool and dupe he had been? Small wonder that Marie was excited. For hours she had been preparing for this visit. Such a scrubbing of the children, such whimperings, such shrill-voiced scoldings! Marie had

searched for garments and shoes, had washed out clothes for the baby, and braided little pigtails. Jacques she had hidden, with strict instructions not to move because he was "working up to a whipping". Bébe, now no longer *the* baby, had been consoled for a resounding slap administered by a quick-tempered mother, by permission to wear Marie's little string of red glass beads. These poor little deposed babies wrung Marie's heart. For so short a time they had their mother's rare and ever rarer caresses, the comfort of her ample breasts for nourishment and rest. Then they seemed to be literally dumped on the floor of the already over-crowded room to make way for their successor. Only Marie, in moments snatched from ever-increasing tasks, consoled them for being brought into a world of which they were already half weary; a world in which some of them elected not to stay.

"Marie, Marie!" came a harsh, impatient call from the house. A quick frown showed between the level black brows of the girl. Of course, that call would come from her father. Not a moment to herself all day long, unless it could be stolen. Henri Fourchette was a man of tremendous nervous energy, most of which, for lack of brains to expend intelligently, was wasted. He was constantly trying to retrieve by physical labour that which he had lost through stupidity. Because his own strength was not sufficient to achieve this, he was forever driving his wife and children on to greater efforts. Even the children of

four and six had their tasks, the neglect of which was heavily punished.

Again the harsh cry came. Marie's firm chin and tightened mouth told of futile rebellion. It was just like her father. There was not a thing to do at the house. Every child had on two shoes and two stockings, and, according to the standards of the family, was clean. Marie had left her mother pinning on her great gold brooch at the neck of her too-tight bodice, which was seldom donned except for a rare trip to church. Then the frown smoothed out. The girl, a lovely picture, even in her clumsy clothes, turned and ran swiftly up the narrow path to the heavy crooked door of the little house. A childish curiosity and love of adventure quickened her steps. Perhaps, after all, her parents were ready to start out on their visit. She had never been in her aunt's home; in the great dairy, of course, when she had been pressed into service during busy times—but never a glimpse behind those frilly muslin curtains.

* * * * *

Rachel Fourchette was an enormous woman. A heavy black down, like a third eyebrow, brushed her upper lip, and stiff little hairs bristled on her fat chins. She ruled the girls in the dairy, the workmen, her husband, with a rod of iron. Her dark eyes shone bright under the thick arch of her brows, and despite the fact that their heavy lids half veiled them, they

missed nothing of what was going on around her. A devout woman, as was seemly for one whom the Lord had prospered—it was a matter of keen satisfaction to her that her only child was already studying for the priesthood. She stood, now, in the cheery brick-paved kitchen, with Fisette, the old servant, and discussed the coming feast.

"Perhaps we should have laid the table in the other room, Fisette," she said dubiously, as she surveyed it, crowded with good things.

"Ah, but no, Madame," cried Fisette, her sallow little face wrinkling in alarm. "So many babies, such a mess as they will make!"

"Yes, that is so," agreed her mistress. "Well, it will not happen again, at any rate. They are all going to Canada."

"To Canada!" Fisette whirled about and faced Madame Fourchette, the gravy dripping unheeded from the big spoon in her hand. "Not to Canada?"

Madame Fourchette nodded, pleased with the consternation she had caused.

"Why on earth would they go there? How can they? Where would all the money come from—and all their babies! Ah, but it is impossible!" exclaimed Fisette.

"You are right," sighed the woman. "Where would all the money come from? Where else but from my poor husband? But one must help where one can. The good Lord would wish us to do that."

"Madame is too good, too good by far," said Fisette seriously, and Madame Fourchette turned, satisfied, from the room. There had been much hard feeling in the neighbourhood over her husband's gradual acquisition of Henri's land. As if it were not better for him to have the management of it than a dolt like Henri! And now they wanted just that little plot of land that was left—just that lush green meadow, and ambling stream to square off their own fields. What better way than to take the land, and in return send him off to Canada? There he would have many acres for his sons to till. There, there would be room and to spare for them all, and criticism would be quieted. Too long had the neighbours grumbled among themselves because her son came home, "playing the gentleman," with what they called "poor Henri's money". Things would be different now. Fisette's "too good, too good" sounded pleasant in her ears. She was happily unconscious of the face Fisette made at her broad back as she left the kitchen.

All credit for the idea of sending Henri Fourchette and his family to Canada was due to Jean Fourchette, Madame's son. There was always that last coveted little bit of land. When, eventually, the farm and dairy business would be sold, that corner would be needed to bring a decent price. Then there was the unexpected stubbornness of the father in refusing to lay off the two young boys, Gabriel and Paul, during slack seasons. True, they received a mere pittance

and worked for less than the other young boys of the neighbourhood, as would be expected when working for an uncle, but what was gained by small wages was more than lost by steady employment; and studying for the priesthood was expensive when one did the thing right. Jean figured that eventually he might have the living in the village, and Henri Fourchette, with his ever-increasing family, must not be pointed at as the family that the priest had robbed.

So Jean Fourchette had consulted with his mother, an eager agent interviewed, and advertising matter sent for. Soon Henri Fourchette was being dazzled by pictures of wheat fields, over which a man's head barely showed, visions of big white houses, set in the midst of acres that stretched to the horizon. Land—virgin land, he was told—was to be had almost for the asking. One crop, and riches would come, two crops, and his fortune would be made. A land all blue and gold. Gold of the grain, and gold of the sunshine. Blue of the sky, and stretching, dim distances. He was told that Canada was a land where his children could work for yet more land for him, where every new one would be an asset, a source of income, instead of another mouth to feed. His wife, whose fecundity had been a grievance to him, took on a new importance in his eyes. / And in return for all this, what would he give up? Just that little bit of his patrimony which was left.

* * * * *

Henri Fourchette sat silent beside his sister-in-law at the long table, unable to eat even these good things so long denied him. His gnarled, brown fingers plucked ceaselessly at his lower lip. Not until this day had the full significance of his going come to him. Was it, as that troublesome wife of his said, another "plot"? But no, it could not be. The curé himself had read to him those little booklets which Jean had secured, telling of the wonders of the new land. Oh, that was true enough. What he had not realized until now was his sense of possession. All the blood of his ancestors called to him from that plot of land. All that was best, all that was loyal, all that was idealistic in him was in the soil of his own country. No chance to back out now. He had gone too far for that. Unthinkable that he tell his brother's wife that he had changed his mind. She was a terror, that one.

Marie, noticing her father's uneasiness, was apprehensive. When he was upset he invariably became angry with one or other of the children. He never struck *her*. Marie often wondered why he did not. She could not know that Henri Fourchette feared this beautiful girl. Subconsciously, he recognized in her that spirit which in himself had been neglected and had died. He feared her because she reminded him of dreams. But the younger children, of coarser clay, became his victims, not of actual cruelties, but of constant slaps, blows, shakings, as he rushed furiously about his work.

"Some day," thought Marie, "I shall make him stop that. When I am just a little bit older. I shall make them all do as I tell them, and we won't come to Madame Fourchette's when she doesn't want us. All but mamma—I shall never be able to do anything with her, she is so—so like a troublesome child."

Marie glanced at her mother, a loyal pity stirring her heart, a touch of annoyance shading her eyes at the woman's inability to cope with the situation. The poor woman sat, sullen and awkward, utterly silent. In a vain effort to hide her embarrassment, in the midst of all this grandeur, she showered unceasing attentions on the two youngest children. Bébe teased for the porcelain top of the beer bottle. The baby whimpered and she longed to nurse him. But what would Madame Fourchette think of that? And this smothering bodice! Would she ever get it fastened once she unfastened it? The whole thing was a plot, a pack of silly nonsense; and that fool, her husband, would sign those papers. These people might well cook capons for them. Life had never been very much, just babies and work, but it had been certain and safe. Now all was uncertainty and danger. She looked up, and caught Marie's glance of sympathy. *There* was a queer one, if you liked, with her high-flying ways with the boys, thinking that she was too good for any of them, and even turning her back on the deputy's son. Many a girl had come by a nice little bit of money that way. Well, she would have

her wings clipped yet. A pretty face got you nothing by marriage. Look at that big black cat at the head of the table with her whiskers bristling. *She* had wedded the rich brother.

At length the long meal was over. Every child had had enough, then too much, and was thinking how much on the morrow it would be regretting its limited capacity. There had been no conversation, except a few words between the brothers on the condition of the herd. Madame Fourchette had sat, large and imposing, never deigning to speak, except an occasional word to Fisette. Now she rose heavily and signalled the others to follow her to the next room. The children were sent out of doors to play. Marie helped Fisette wash the dishes. She took delight in working about the big kitchen. Great copper kettles winked and blinked at her from the walls. So many pots and pans were there, such a quantity of dishes, and more dishes in which to put away food that had been left over. And how clean and particular Fisette was about everything! A bit ridiculous, so it seemed to Marie, but very delightful!

Fisette looked at the girl's lovely face.

"She has all the beauty of her mother," thought Fisette, "but the good Lord knows her mother never had anything else. This girl has something more, an air! She will marry a rich man in Canada, and be a lady. All the men in Canada are rich." Fisette let a little sigh escape her, as she disappeared into the

dairy. *She* had hoped to go to Canada some day, and marry a rich man, but she had let the years slip by unnoticed, and suddenly she was old and yellow.

Marie, left to herself, wandered to the door, the upper half of which was open, and looked out. The white house formed one side of a quadrangle. The other three sides were the dairy and out-buildings. The tangy smell of the manure, piled up in the enclosure, rose to her nostrils. A cow mooed softly. Fisette's voice struck sharply, in a torrent of scolding at one of the girls in the dairy—then silence. The soft, honey-colored sunshine spilled down, and to Marie it seemed as if the world had stopped moving, lay sleeping in the warm light. Then she became conscious of voices in the other room, speaking words that were new to her, the "Cipiarre", Alberta, Calgary, and again, the "Cipiarre"!

What could it mean? The picture of the meadow a few hours before flashed across her brain. For an instant fear seized her, then a mad exultation that tingled to her finger tips. Something was going to happen. She knew, she knew! Adventures were coming at last. Both hands on the door, she skipped a gay little dance, her eyes bright, her cheeks flushed.

"Oh, the Cipiarre, the Cipiarre, the wonderful, wonderful Cipiarre," she chanted softly, laughingly.

On the way back to their home her mother told Marie that they were leaving for Canada in a month.

"So far, so far," she moaned, "and we shall all starve to death among strangers."

"We nearly starve to death now," reminded Marie.

"And we sleep on the boats for nights and nights," sighed her mother.

"Are there elephants?" asked little Jacques, clutching Marie's hand tightly in his excitement.

"Elephants—stupid, of course not—polar bears!" said Gabriel. Gabriel knew. He was the oldest boy, and had been at school.

For once the family loitered behind, not attempting to keep pace with the rapid, uneven steps of the father. Marie's breast stirred with excitement. Miracles were happening. Canada! Then her shining eyes glimpsed a bright star mounting swiftly above a row of poplars, leaving the lagging sickle moon far behind on a primrose bed. "Lovely, lovely," murmured the girl to the small child she carried on her aching arm. Tears smarted in her eyes.

CHAPTER II.

EVERY bit of knowledge gained is a step up a hill, disclosing a broader horizon. You learn of something new. Almost at once you hear of it, you read of it—your view of the subject widens. Just so, in Madame Fourchette's kitchen, Marie had heard for the first time the words, "Calgary", "Alberta". Now all the talk in her home was of these places, and others of the Canadian west. There was Saskatchewan, for instance, another vast province, larger than Germany, so said a neighbour, who laughed derisively when Marie's mother had said that they would be near some girlhood friend who had gone to Canada and settled in Saskatchewan. People living near them dropped in to discuss the nine-days' wonder of their going, and Madame Fourchette, glowing with the pleasure of the gay life about her humble home, happily dispensed coffee or beer. These neighbours had friends who had been in Alberta. They had met people who had gone over, become rich, and returned to visit their native country. One woman had come back wearing a great sweeping willow plume in her big black hat—

and silk stockings. And not one of them had returned travelling steerage. The Fourchette family was told of the foothills, the great herds of cattle, the vast prairie, and farms of many acres. And such wages as were paid to the men who helped with the harvest! Henri Fourchette was reassured. Madame Fourchette, her home gayer than ever before, complained unceasingly, for neighbours became suddenly dear, but her inner thoughts were fixed on a picture of herself in a hat with a willow plume, and silk stockings. Silk stockings! The woman shuffled impatiently in her sabots.

Marie could focus no mental picture of her future. Canada lay ahead, enormous, broad and flat, wrapped in the mists of her inexperience. She went about as one in a dream, but the smaller children had very definite ideas of the country to which they were going. They pictured to themselves Indian fights in which they would take part. They would have a busy time in the new land, killing wild animals that would howl at their door, slaying wolves that would threaten the herd; and though they were laughed at for their fancies, they still clung to their dreams. Gabriel thought not at all of the country to which he was going, but only of the results of the migration. He would be rich. How, or where these riches would be acquired never bothered him. One went to Canada and became rich. Very well, he was going to Canada, That was simple. And no more hard work. That

was another fact. No wonder he patronized his play-fellows.

At length the last bit of packing was done, the keys handed over to Uncle Fourchette. What a time it had been! The family was only allowed so much baggage. Those feather beds! They must go, every one of them. Were they not going where they might all be frozen in their beds anyway? Madame Fourchette had screamed and gesticulated for days. And the heavy chest, it must go, and this, and this. Marie had tried to hide things, old clothes and bits of cloth, and Henri Fourchette had "chucked" and "chicked" and dashed madly about, and now they were off to Antwerp. The mother, from whom the family had expected a scene, was filled with importance and pride at the stir their going had caused, and Henri Fourchette brooded in black misery over leaving the land of his fathers. From the minute they boarded their train for Antwerp until they were in their quarters on the boat, the whole family seemed to lose its identity. They were looked after like so many express parcels—told to go there, to come here; assigned quarters for sleeping, shown where food was to be purchased, examined by physicians. A certain amount of deference was shown to them because they were Belgians, and hence considered clean and thrifty, superior beings to those who came literally in hordes from Central Europe. Moreover they were going to take up land, had a little money, understood farming.

Their quarters in Antwerp had been crowded but fairly comfortable. On the boat, of course, things were not as pleasant. Madame Fourchette and the small children had a room to themselves, while Henri Fourchette and the two older boys, Gabriel and Paul, were in the men's quarters. The heat, which made the great metal beams sweat, the throb and shake of the engines, the odor of unclean human bodies crowded together, gave all the older members of the family violent headaches. Many of the emigrants had no idea of orderliness, and made the work of the stewards a Herculean task. At the long table they slopped their stew, threw the potato skins on the floor. At tea time when their herrings were served out to them, they would sit about on their bundles, cutting up their fish with their knives and throwing the left-over bits over their shoulders. Henri Fourchette kept himself apart. He preferred to be alone. But Madame Fourchette was a born mixer, made friends with everyone, and despite the illness of herself and the children, enjoyed the trip. However, it could have been better. She was allowed little privileges at first. When she emptied the sugar from the bowl into a bag in her lap, or wheedled little extras for the children, the waiter had laughed, joking her and Marie, amused at Marie's embarrassed blushes. Oh, the girl was a little beauty if ever one could get her away from that horde of children. Several times Marie's mother had pressed her into small services for either the steward or steward-

ess, gaining thereby little privileges and favours for herself. There were many ways in which Marie could make herself useful.

And then Marie had come to her with flaming cheeks, and vowed that she would never go near that fat waiter again, and her mother called her a fool for making such a fuss; but the girl had shuddered, threatening to tell of the man's gross kiss, to her father, and that silenced the woman. The rest of the journey was harder, after that, and Marie's troubles were added to by a constant complaining from her mother about her selfishness. Every day the passengers became more careless about their habits, more unkempt. There were homesick women and men with the last flicker of hope dying out of their eyes as they neared the promised land and it became more of a reality and less of a dream. There were sick babies, and sticky children, hopeful young couples and lonely young men and women, and some keyed up to the high adventure. There were dark-eyed men, ranting of equality, of capital, of labour—and groups who, with a haunting sweetness, sang the songs of their country.

Marie had a strange feeling of detachment, as if the boat were a separate world, floating in a void, with its distinct classes, its different nationalities, and various types. And her great joy was the ripple of the moon on the ocean at night, the long blue-grey smoke line of a passing ship, the churn of foam the

boat would make, and sea birds, like winged flecks of foam, screaming in dipping circles. For the first time she caught a glimpse of that other world as represented by some first-class passengers, who went slumming through the steerage, and she became acutely conscious of where she was in the scheme of things. Here on the wide ocean, between their forsaken country and their new country, they seemed to lie between the past and future—homeless, timeless. What would become of it all? Were these shining women she had seen what she would become? Had they sprung from what she was? A great impatience seized Marie. She was weary of travelling, of this feeling of suspense. She wanted the moment of impact.

At length, with the dawn of a new day, came the first sight of Canada. Already, in the night, the boat had entered the St. Lawrence river. Everyone jostled and crowded to glimpse their new country. The tremendous river, hemmed in by mountains and sheer cliffs, with here and there breaks in the mighty wall through which could be glimpsed fine farms, reassured the weary incomers. Excitement ran high. In many tongues, exclamations of surprise and pleasure at the beauty unfolding were heard. Suddenly all little irritabilities with each other disappeared. People looked about them and felt that these among whom they stood were their very good friends; their last friends. Tears at the thought of parting sprang to many eyes. Women laughed and wept hysterically,

and kissed each other's children. Men shook hands with solemn promises to let each other know how things went with them. Now was Quebec the beautiful to be seen—the lovely buildings of the upper town mounting to the crest of the citadel, their sky line making a noble background for the Lower Town. The throbbing ceased as the boat slid in. Canada! Tears stood in Marie's eyes as she clasped tightly the hands of the two little ones. A dock hand called aloud in French. Marie turned and met Henri Fourchette's eyes, and they smiled intimately, sadly, at one another.

"He is homesick, too," thought Marie. "We never think of him, and what he may be feeling."

Long corridors, more examinations, and rest—rest and good food in comfortable rooms. Marie and her mother, weary as they were, enjoyed bathing the children in warm water, in the big white tubs, and tucking them away to sleep in clean little cribs and beds. By the time they boarded the train in the evening, all felt refreshed. They had bought food at the immigration sheds, had had hearty meals, a change of clothing, and rest. Now a pleasurable excitement filled the whole family. This was the last long leap of the journey. They would travel across a continent, they who had crossed the ocean. Many people in Belgium, who thought themselves very grand, had never been more than a day's journey from home. For a day or two each one had a sharp awareness of

the scenes through which they were passing, which gradually dulled as the days passed, and impression after impression numbed their brains.

The train rushed through Quebec, with its woods, its Laurentian Hills and nestling lakes, its farms and tiny villages over which watched the great grey monasteries, and the little white churches; into Ontario, with its tall, spreading elms and maples, the broad green acres, the gracious farm houses; through crowded cities and little villages, on to Northern Ontario, circling great lakes, crashing through tunnels, swinging around curves. The deep woods and smiling fields laid out like a great checker board, gave place to cedars and scrub oak, to pines, and then to spruce and rock. Cities were left behind, stations were few, and marked a tiny collection of little reddish brown houses. At last they were in Manitoba—broad, beautiful fields again, and rows of trees—and grain already ripening. At Winnipeg the Fourchettes changed cars. They did not leave the station, but sat about with the patience of the European peasant until things were made ready for them again. All that one had to do on the long journey, apparently, was to sit still until someone came to look after one. After leaving Winnipeg, the train seemed to take on additional speed over the level distances. It tossed back the miles, and with its careless tossing it threw back their old home, and friends and customs—all their past life. Now they were in Saskatchewan, and their companions became

fewer and fewer—Saskatchewan behind them, and Alberta at last.

Heavily Marie nodded. They would soon be in Calgary. The end of the long, long journey was in sight. This last day had seemed more wearying than all the other days of the journey put together. The reek of cooking food, train smoke, and unclean bodies filled the girl's nostrils and nearly choked her. Babies lay sleeping, or whimpering hungrily. Fat women gathered up bundles grotesquely the shape of themselves. Two young girls primped and giggled, undaunted by what was before them, for an organization had already secured them places.

Marie sat dull and aching. How many hours more? How many lifetimes since she had stood in that sun-steeped meadow, red poppies flaming in the cool deep grass, the tall, slim poplars stretching to the blue sky? A world of color, and sun, and peace; and they had traded it for this! The prairie stretched out dull and grey and flat. Wire fences, upheld by tottering little poles, enclosed land that no one seemed to want. Not a tree was to be seen. Where were the fields of yellow grain, the happy harvesters?

"It *was* a trick!" she thought, fiercely. The dust of the prairie was bitter in her mouth.

The sun began to sink; the train rushed on. Then, with a little gasp, the girl became aware of the Rocky Mountains. Far in the distance, yet in the clear atmosphere seeming so near that one could walk to

them, the blue mountains cut across the sun's path. Their silence could be felt. Tall and austere they stood, snow-crowned, mysterious, majestic. The sky about them flamed into reds and purples, flinging ragged banners in an eerie pageant. Never, never had Marie seen anything like that. She wanted to fling out eager arms, to sink in worship. Her eyes filled with tears. The hugeness, the immensity of it all! Never again would her meadow satisfy. She had lost her own country. Could she grasp this new and mighty land?

The dwellings thickened, small factories flashed by, tracks spread out—pavements, stores, lights—Calgary. Wearily the immigrants trekked through the gateway into the waiting room, sitting in groups together, patient, stoical, humble, stolid one would think, until one looked into their eyes.

More officials, more red tape: then clean, comfortable quarters for them again, and heavy sleep for the women. The men stayed together late that night, talking and planning. Men of the town came to greet friends from their old homes, and enjoyed the sense of importance it gave them to know where the best bargain for a tent was to be made, for a second-hand waggon, where one bought horses, and land.

Land, of course, was the great thing. For the first time Henri Fourchette became aware that certain sections of the province were only fit for grazing, that there were dry belts, that some parts needed clearing

of heavy scrub. Homesteads were available—a quarter section could be had for the payment of ten dollars, and the guarantee to plough a certain number of acres a year; but the Belgian was warned that the best lands had been taken, and what remained was too far from a market; better stick to his original plan of buying C.P.R. land—the payments were easy, and spread over many years.

The next few days were taken up by Marie and her mother in walking the streets of the small city, though they saw practically nothing of Calgary, being afraid to venture far from the sleeping quarters; in washing out the soiled clothes, and buying provisions for their new home.

Henri and Gabriel went first to the land office. From all over Europe were men seeking land in Canada, the last foothold in the world for those who would pull themselves up from grinding poverty, or near serfdom, by the strength of their muscles. Nowhere else was rich land to be had in the civilized world almost for the asking. All that was wanted was the assurance of the holder that he would help himself, become a producer. Men who had never seen a plough were there, some eager for a start, some anxious to buy land cheap and sell it when it was dear—many from the United States, who had sold their own farms for a big price and now were buying up similar land for almost nothing. Splendid citizens, used to farming, their pockets bulging with money, speaking the language of

the country! There were great fair men from the North of Europe, not afraid of clearing the land, not afraid of the cold winters, bringing with them the heritage of healthy off-spring; and men from crowded countries, men who sought riches, men who sought freedom, men who sought health, or the opportunity to work.

At length the whole business was settled, the necessities bought. On every hand Henri Fourchette had been met by eagerness on the part of the officials to give him advice and warn him against immediate difficulties. Before daylight, one morning, Gabriel and his father set out for their farm, the new team of horses drawing the heavy waggon that had been purchased. In it were a month's provisions, an old tent, some second-hand furniture and their precious bundles from the old land. Marie and her mother, guarding the flock of children, took the train for the little town near their farm, and there awaited the arrival of the waggon. That evening, just as the sun began to slip down the long hill of the Alberta sky, the Fourchettes, weary and stiff, climbed down from the waggon and stood in the midst of their broad acres. Dazedly, they looked about them. On one hand the rolling foothills, edged by scrub, led to the Rocky Mountains. On the other, the broad, flat prairie stretched, mile upon mile, unbroken by a single rise. No shipwrecked crew, clinging to a raft in mid-ocean, ever felt more alone and forgotten by the world. Bébe sniffled. The child

in the mother's arms wailed. The little boys looked about, half fearful, for the Indians, the cowboys, the wild animals.

"Well, here we are," laughed Marie, with forced cheerfulness, "I'll light a little fire and make coffee."

She looked around and saw that there was no wood. "I shall use one of the grocery boxes. We must get the tent up and the beds made."

The girl began to pull at the bundles in the waggon. Every one set to work at once, glad of the thought of hot coffee, and beds.

"Thank the good Lord for beds," sighed Madame Fourchette. "If the day has been happy, to go to bed is a fine way to end it. If it has been sad, it is a comfortable way to end it."

The little fire snapped, the smell of coffee rose in the still air, and cheered the newcomers. The rap of the stones against the tent pegs was sharp in the cool evening. The long twilight lingered to see them safely into bed. The Fourchettes were at home in Canada.

CHAPTER III.

THE Fourchette family heaved a sigh of relief as the year closed in. It had been hard. Henri Fourchette had driven his wife and children almost beyond their endurance, with the tasks he had imposed. Marie had secured housework at Clovelly, the home of a wealthy English family in the neighbourhood. Henri and Gabriel found work in the neighbourhood during the harvest. Henri earned five dollars a day, Gabriel three, and even young Paul made thirty a month doing chores which released the older men for the harvesting. Working near their own place, they had helped their father on their land at all hours of the daylight, when not on their job. The man had roused the two boys daily, when the first early dawn of the prairies peeped, hushed and wan, above the level land, and their mother, in bitterness, had watched them ploughing, stooping, trudging, their black bodies grotesquely heavy in the uncertain light.

"He will kill them, that man of mine," she said, angrily, to the little girls. "I bear them, and he kills them. What is the use of getting on in the world at that cost? It is for our children that we want all this, and we shall lose them."

At seven the three would be back at their other place, having breakfast. The harvest was a never-ceasing wonder to the Belgians—the eight great horses that pulled the two binders, plodding steadily under the drenching brightness of the sun, the shrill clicking of the machinery, the rhythmic sway of the stookers as they followed, piling up the sheaves of wheat. The hard metallic brilliancy of it all! The gold of the sun, and gold of the wheat, the piercing beams as bright spots of the machinery caught rays of the sun. The sky, so high above, steel-blue, without a cloud, the distant snow-capped mountains, platinum white in the dazzling brightness. Across the level land, the three elevators winked and blinked in the hot light like three giant Cyclops, standing as if awaiting the golden sacrifice of the country. Men soon learned in this land that if their great maws were not filled with wheat, they were visited with the curses of hunger and cold, of sapped manhood, of endless drudgery. And it was a desperate task to keep these creatures satisfied in a country where the flambeau of drought scorched the land, where the scourge of blinding windstorms whipped out the planted seeds, and buried the frail fences deep in dust, and the slashing swords of hail cut down the struggling grain. But this year had been good. The wheat was running more than thirty bushels to the acre, and grading high. True to the typical psychology of the country, the bad years were forgotten—next year would be better than ever.

Now the threshing machines stood in the great fields, among the stacks of wheat, and poured out the husked grain in a golden stream. The waggons drove up, were filled, and hurried off to the elevators. These trips to the elevators were Gabriel's joy. Several times he had been sent to help the driver. The waggons were drawn by eight or ten horses. Singing, calling to the horses, flourishing his long whip high above the beasts, the driver would tear down the last long slope of white road, harnesses jingling, hoofs clattering, while Gabriel clung fast to the high wagon. Not slackening his speed, the farmer would take the last turn, sweep up to the elevator, on to the weigh scales, not an inch out, not an inch to spare. It was glorious! The horses, steaming, would shake themselves, toss their heads, their flanks quivering. These Westerners with their horses were marvellous to the boy. There was a man in the neighbourhood who could drive a thirty-horse team, and Gabriel looked at him with awe.

At length, the harvest, lasting into December, was over, and the family settled down for the winter. The money earned by the three harvesters and Marie had been a welcome addition to the meagre capital, enabling them to get some household necessities, a fairly plentiful supply of provisions for the winter, and feed for the horses and two cows which they had bought. They had moved from the tent into a sod house, which each member of the family had had a

share in building, and a rough wooden shelter had been put up for the stock. Oddly enough, it was the mother of the family who settled down in Canada most happily. During the busy season, no one had called on her, but when the first snow had fallen, and work had slackened up a bit, the neighbours' wives came to see her, accepting her with the real democracy of the Western farmer. Mrs. Hearst, Marie's mistress, was unfailingly kind, because of her love for Marie, although she heartily disliked the girl's mother. She sent over old garments that could be made up for the children, and was forever bringing medical supplies for their youthful ailments. These attentions were accepted by Madame Fourchette as a matter of course, as if they were her due for coming to live in the country. She had an intimate friend in Mrs. Canning, a stout, breezy, vulgar woman, who bragged of the way she bullied her husband. "And I jist said to Tom Canning, 'Now lookit here'," seemed to be always on the tip of her tongue. Every time she saw the seven Fourchette children gathered together, she would regard them with dismay, and undisguised disapproval. "You'll learn a thing or two," she would say to Madame Fourchette, with a wise nod and a wink. She had a most contemptuous opinion of all Europe, thinking of it as a succession of little villages, devoid of modern conveniences, and improvements, and talking "the darnedest gibberish". She invariably shouted at every member of the Four-

chette family, as if she thought that by so doing they could grasp her English.

"Over here, you don't need to have children unless you like," she solemnly informed Madame Fourchette. "Why, in America, no one has big families but the foreigners. No siree. When the dagos and the Pollacks came pouring in, we says, 'All right, your men can go ahead and dig our sewers, and build our railways, and your women can go ahead and have the babies for the country'. When the foreigners began coming in, we quit." She waved her fat hands dramatically.

"But how?" asked the Belgian woman, her dark eyes bright with interest, as she struggled to follow the words of her companion.

"What's your husband like?" asked the other woman, sharply, "filled with old-fashioned European notions, I expect."

Madame Fourchette nodded. "He is a strict Catholic."

The woman shook her head. "That makes it hard for you; but when you need me, tell me and I'll fix you up."

For the first time since she had married, Madame Fourchette was neither bearing a child nor nursing one, and she was glad. It seemed to her that her whole body sagged with the burden that had been imposed upon it. Her breasts, that in her girlhood had been small white mounds of exquisite beauty, dragged

heavily to her waist. Her corsetless figure was soft and ungainly, her hair gray, like a badger's, and her wrinkled face filled her with vain regrets for her lost loveliness. And she wanted rest, rest from pulling and squirming babies, from fretful crying; from the gnawing consciousness of not doing one's duty by the wee things, not loving them enough. And here, in this new country, one owned land, many acres of it; one had friends, jolly fat women who rattled on in a new tongue, and made one laugh; and one need have no more children. To think that she had not wanted to come! In a year or so, they would build a new house, of four rooms at least, and she would have a garden. If only Henri were not so difficult.

But Henri was difficult, and every day became more difficult. He hated this new land.

"Everything goes against me, everything against me," he would murmur, plucking nervously at his lower lip. Beer was expensive, in this country, and the children learned a new, strange independence which had not been exhibited in the Fourchette family yet, but was sensed by the head of the household, nevertheless. Then, the man had intended putting the boys out to work for the winter. True, wages were low in the winter, but he would be relieved of their board, when along came a man and told him that he must send his children to school. Telling him what he should do with his own sons! He had raged and stormed, but of no avail. It was the law. He would

have allowed Marie to remain at Mrs. Hearst's, but he feared the woman's influence on the girl. Oh, but she had given herself the airs when she had come home in the fall—so finicky at the table, always correcting her brothers and sisters.

And that dreadful woman who came every few days to see his wife. He would stop that "janot" coming to his house. He had spoken to his wife about it, and she had just sniffed and gone on mixing the chicken-feed. She never used to act so, his word had been law. He jumped up and began again with his stumbling haste, his many tasks.

For Marie, the fall had been a happy one. An entirely new world had opened up for the girl, when she went to work for Mrs. Hearst. The Hearsts were among the oldest settlers in the district. Both Mr. and Mrs. Hearst came from fine English stock. More than twenty years before, their elder son had shown symptoms of tubercular trouble and, believing that the high, dry air and brilliant sunshine of Alberta would benefit him, they had moved out. In the earlier years, Mr. Hearst had made a great deal of money out of cattle, but had been one of the first to see the possibilities of the province for wheat growing and had gone in for that. Now his younger son, Frank, who had taken over the management of the farm, was one of the first farmers to see the ultimate necessity of mixed farming. Unlike so many of the Englishmen that came to Alberta, the Hearsts were born farmers.

"The Lord has done His best for the province," Mr. Hearst used to say, "but He can't do everything. These chaps will learn to rotate their crops yet, if they don't go broke in the meantime."

George Hearst raged against the careless farming of his neighbours, and blamed them for the weeds which were such a curse to every farm in the vicinity. When a weed inspector of his district lost his position, because he was conscientious in the fulfillment of his duties, George Hearst decided that his place was in parliament, and he became one of the few farmers in the provincial legislature. He resolved that there would be many more before he was through with the game.

Mrs. Hearst had been pretty, but now had what might be called a "tennis face" in its lean brown intensity. Her vivacity, however, made up for her lost beauty. Being intensely alive, she shared her life with everyone with whom she came in contact. Her two sons adored her, her husband was still her faithful lover. Her friends' troubles were hers, and also their joys. She was brilliant, witty, well-read. Although having only twenty-four hours a day, in common with the rest of the world, the Hearst family had that beautiful art of living which is peculiarly English. They had time for riding, for walking, for tennis; time for a cozy hour over the teacups by the big fireplace, time to read, to study, to write letters—and time to look after their farm. The elder son, now

a robust man, was a successful lawyer in Calgary. He came out to the farm frequently, and an invitation to "Clovelly" for the week-end put the seal of approval on one, socially, in town. The younger son loved the place and was the real manager. His father, when he was not busy with his parliamentary duties, spent most of his time pottering about the garden.

Into this home of culture and refinement came Marie. Mrs. Hearst had never seen Marie. She had sent a message to the farm, asking if she could have the girl for the busy months. When Anna, the old housekeeper, told her that Marie was waiting, Mrs. Hearst went to her in the back garden. The girl stood by the great, flaming poppy bed, her deep blue eyes eager with curiosity, the sun burnishing her waving dark hair, and not even her ugly, heavy dress, her coarse woolen stockings and clumsy shoes, could hide the exquisite loveliness of her. Mrs. Hearst caught her breath at her sheer beauty. She went impulsively to the girl.

"My dear, such a pretty picture! I shall paint you by the poppy bed." Marie's delicate eyebrows puckered as she struggled for understanding. "You are so pretty," explained the older woman, touching the girl's cheek, gently. "I shall make a picture of you." Marie nodded eagerly.

"We are both pretty," the girl said, haltingly.

Mrs. Hearst laughed gayly. "Not both of us, now, I am afraid, but I was. And you have come all the

way from Belgium. Such a distance! I love Belgium. I went to school in Brussels."

The girl's eyes fretted, unable to understand, and Mrs. Hearst broke into a torrent of French. Marie clapped her hands joyously. "We can talk together!"

"Yes," assented her new mistress, "but in English that you may learn. I shall help you out in French when you are puzzled."

Marie was led into the big, roomy kitchen. "Annie," cried Mrs. Hearst, beckoning the housekeeper to her. "See what I have just found in the poppy bed. This is Marie, who has come all the way from Belgium to help us. I am going to make her some little cotton frocks, with short sleeves, a blue, and a pink, and a white, and a yellow—and get her white shoes and stockings!" she finished, triumphantly.

The old servant raised her hands in futile protest. "Surely in this busy time you have enough to do!"

"Oh, I'll run them up on the machine, in no time."

"You'll have a doll, I'm thinking, not a maid."

"Marie will work. She has a splendid face—intelligent, sensible and sweet. She will not take advantage of me."

And so Marie had become the pet of the household—for her beauty and charm had captured them all. As the summer had neared its close she had looked forward to going home with dread. The one small room, the constant smell of cooking, the eternal washing which her mother was always doing (yet never

enough clean clothes to put on the children), the shrill voices wrangling, the tumbling into bed with others—all made her very soul shudder. Her father worried her least of all. He, at least, was silent. He was neither greedy nor vulgar. Since living with Mrs. Hearst, Marie had become aware of something fine in her father that she had not sensed before. And now the girl, back at her home, smothered in its atmosphere, looked on those days at Clovelly as upon days spent in heaven, and only the thought of her return in the spring made her life bearable. Already she felt an alien among her own people.

Like most Alberta autumns, the weather had been beautiful. There had been an early frost, though not a heavy one, frightening the farmers who had not finished cutting their grain, for they remembered other years when a late August frost had left the country a black desolation. Well on into November the glorious weather lasted, and the Fourchette family began to think the stories of bitter, cold winters, a myth. But they were ready for it when it did come. They had a stove now, and the shack was well banked about with manure, the smell of which filled them with homesickness. Marie enjoyed her drives into the tiny village with the milk. Such an ugly village as it was! A little bare red-brown station, a few naked-looking grey houses, a garage, a blacksmith shop and a general store. Not a garden, not a tree was visible. It lay, a little knot in the dun grey carpet of the prairie. A

few ploughed fields were passed, great black patches on the golden stubble. Hungarian Partridge would rise in flocks from the roadside, and prairie chicken perch saucily on the stooks of wheat. Through the long, sunny days, the wild ducks travelled south, and in the mornings and evenings, covered the sloughs. Such feasting as the Fourchette family had those autumn days! Near the farm were clumps of poplar and Buffalo willow brush, fringed at the edges, thick yellow in the center, where the leaves were touched less heavily by the frost. For miles, the foothills rolled out to the Rockies, white with the new snow. But more wonderful than all else to Marie, in this new land, was the sky. From sunrise to sunrise, its beauty shifted and varied, every change lovelier than the last. In late afternoon the sun went down behind the mountains, now blue and cold, flinging flaming banners. Clouds rolled up and burst into flame that blackened as more gathered. One would think the wild glory could herald in nothing less than the end of all the worlds.

Marie, perched on the high waggon, would feel her blood tingle, the tears smart in her eyes. The air would become cold. Urging the horses to greater speed, she would clatter into the farmyard, for suddenly loneliness, a half fear, would seize her. For with the fall of the cold clear opalescent night would come the coyote's cry—that awful call, like a lost soul in the desolate land. A grey wraith would skirt the edge of

a field, would slither through a fence. The glory would fade from the sky, and again that lifted cry, loud, long, called back. A yearning would seize the girl, for people, warmth and light. Tugging frantically at the horses' harness, she would put them in for the night and, speeding up the path, burst into the dark jumble that was her home. Her father would be standing in front of the black rectangle of the window, his hands on the frame, brooding into the night. Her mother would be bending over the warm stove, cooking, her shrill voice scolding Adele for her laziness about setting the table, or Paul, because he was crouched over a book in a dark corner, or she would be making playful stabs at the small children, and sending them into shrieks of laughter.

Madame Fourchette was happy. She had white bread for her children. On the table at every meal was put a jug of milk, and Mrs. Hearst had sent over three bags of potatoes. Her husband, or Gabriel, could go to the door of the hut, shot-gun raised, and then, such a meal! They would have the delicious meat of prairie chicken, or partridge, or, going farther afield, they would bring home those plump, grain-fed ducks, not a taste of fish about them, their crops bursting with the finest wheat in the land. Marie would rub her red hands over the stove and remove her heavy sweaters, inhaling delightedly the smell of the meal cooking. She would chatter with the children of what they had learned at school, and of their wonderful

teacher, and bits of gossip would be exchanged. She saw the plenty within doors, and thought of the beauty she had just left, and she loved this land; then the sight of her father, remote, unhappy, made her think of that vast loneliness outside, and she hated it. It had gone into her and made her live utterly. No feelings or emotions could be anything but intense. Whether it was the immensity of the country, the distant mountains, the high, rare atmosphere, and almost constant sun—life tingled in Marie to her very finger tips and her face glowed with a new and eager beauty. She thought of herself in Belgium as a dimly remembered stranger.

* * * * *

The year hurried to its close. Gabriel, Paul and Jacques huddled each night about the dim oil lamp, studying their lessons, after their chores were done. Always on Gabriel's face was a frown of discontent. He heard the other boys talking, and, though they all had work to do none of them toiled as he and his brothers did.

"I have to get up at five," he complained to one chap, "and there is no need for it in the winter. My father always has me cleaning the stable or the chicken house, or mending harness, or something."

"Why," scoffed the other boy, contemptuously, "I guess my dad would like me to do that, too, but I won't."

"You won't? Doesn't he make you?"

"How could he?"

"He can beat you," said Gabriel quietly, the memories of thrashings making his voice bitter.

"Just let him try that once, see?" said the boy. "He'd never get another chance."

"What would you do?"

"Beat it, get out," he answered, succinctly. "Any way, I'm going to California as soon as I get enough money. Everyone is rich there, and they have no winter. Besides, you can buy second-hand motor cars for next to nothing."

"I thought that everyone here was rich, before we came," said Gabriel, the disillusioned.

Talks such as this bred in Gabriel a deep resentment against his father. He loved the prairies, the spaciousness, the long, level vistas. Had he been allowed to ride about, after his chores were done, he would have found some measure of contentment, for he loved horses, but this his father would not permit. The horses must be spared for work, the boy found more tasks. His teacher worked hard at school with him, and he was a fair scholar, but his perpetually weary body deadened his brain. Some way, somehow, when he could leave school, he would earn enough money to take him to California. And so he bided his time.

When the family had almost forgotten to shiver in anticipation of a western Canadian winter, it blew

down upon them. In the late afternoon it began to snow, softly, gently, at first—then dense and thick, filling in the roadsides, weighing against the eyelids of the boys as they trudged from school, hanging heavy on their caps, their eyelashes, their downy upper lips. By the time they reached their home, it was shrieking like a fiend. The blizzard had the country in its grip. Working in a frenzy of fear and haste, Henri and his two sons dashed about making the stable door fast, battenning down the chicken coops, getting the milking done. Marie and her mother tore the clothes off the line, warned the little ones to stay indoors, and with a bang of the door, were gone again, to help the men. Breathless, their tasks finished, they gathered in the small room.

All night long the storm lasted. Cattle, gathering in the hollow of the hills, were smothered to death. A neighbour, stumbling home, fell down and died, forty feet from his home, unable to find his way. Once, during the night, the rickety door of the little shack blew open and the storm came tearing, shrieking in, its white shroud trailing over the floor. Marie, huddled in her bed, with an arm around each of her sisters, shivered, and was glad that her mother had brought the feather beds from Belgium. They had quarrelled passionately over the bringing of them. In the morning the wind had dropped. Overhead the sun shone brightly. The whole prairie was one level sheet of dazzling white, so brilliant that one had to close one's eyes against the glare.

"The wind has spent itself," said Henri Fourchette. "Now the sun will melt all this. It is good, good for the land."

But no wind in Alberta, in winter, means cold. Cold that clutches the whole country like a vice—a cruel, a bitter thing. The thermometer dropped more than 40 degrees below zero. The Fourchettes gathered about the little stove, their backs icy, as it struggled valiantly to throw them warmth. Thick white frost gathered like snow on the walls. They worried about their fuel. Coal was fairly cheap, being mined so near at hand, but their money was getting low. Timbers creaked and snapped with the frost. The boys came in from the stables, tears caused by the frost-ache in their hands and feet frozen on their cheeks. Gabriel insisted on driving in with the milk, displaying an unusual thoughtfulness, for which Marie blessed him. He started off jauntily enough, a black bundle on the high seat. The horses' shaggy coats were white with frost. The screeching of the runners on the sleigh could be heard for half a mile in the cold stillness. When he came back, his nose and cheeks were badly frostbitten, and Marie cared for him tenderly.

Day after day the cold lasted. The family, thrown together all the time, became restless. Madame Fourchette missed the visits of her friend, Mrs. Canning, and just at Christmas time became convinced that she was to have another child. Gabriel fretted at

being shut up so much with his father, and lived from day to day in dread of the long drive with the milk, until his mother, with a new, strange authority, insisted that the milk should not be taken in to the town. The small children were boisterous, peevish or silly, in turn, because they could not get out in the open air, and the air in the shack was well-nigh putrid.

Henri Fourchette sat in front of the oven, muttering to himself, raging at the amount of coal that his wife was shoveling into the fire. He spoke sharply to her about it, and she threw him a black look from her sullen, resentful eyes, answering him in English to plague him, for he could not, or would not, speak the strange language.

One morning Marie, on going to the window, saw above the western hill a wide arch of warm, clear blue.

"Look, Gabriel, the sky is lovely again. Ever since the blizzard two weeks ago it has been cold and colourless. All its colours have been chilled."

"I think that is a Chinook arch," cried the boy. "I have heard the teacher at school tell about them. If it is, a chinook wind will spring up and it will be warm. Pray the Good Mother that it is."

By noon, the thermometer had leaped from forty below to twenty above, the breeze was warm and spring-like. When Gabriel left at three with the milk, it was forty above, and the window sills and door frames were dripping with melting snow. The horses stamped and tossed, poultry crowed and squawked in

the yard. It was as if the giant prairie was freed for a spell from his iron shackles and was gingerly stretching his cramped and aching limbs. Thus the winter passed; blizzard, sunshine, cold, winds and Chinooks. At Christmas time, Frank Hearst rode over with delicacies, and a gift for every one in the family. For Marie there were four precious books, the first books that she had ever owned. Her joy and gratitude were unbounded.

"But, mother," Frank had protested when he had seen them, "these are too old for Marie."

"Nonsense, child, Marie has an adult mind. She is a very clever girl. Moreover, she is the eldest of a family and that ages one. I would rather talk to Marie than many of the women I know."

At length the longed-for spring came, coquetting with winter, withdrawing, advancing, hesitating, for springs are feckless things in Alberta. Marie was able to make the journey more frequently to Clovelly, where she was always warmly welcomed, and was eagerly looking forward to her summer's work there. Mrs. Hearst had put her on a regular course of reading and was amazed at the amount of ground the girl covered.

"How do you do it, Marie?" she would ask. "Where do you find time from those eternal tasks of yours, your endless mothering of those children?"

"At all times, when papa isn't about. He hates to see me with a book. If one enjoys reading, one finds

time for it. I do most of mine driving in and out with the milk. We have more milk to sell now. We have bought two new cows and we have a new calf," she added proudly. "Next fall, if we have a good crop, we are going to start our house. When that is built, I shall be able to slip away by myself sometimes."

"And when are you going to come to me again?" asked the older woman. "Annie was saying to-day that she would have liked to have had you here while the seeding is going on."

Marie looked distressed. "Perhaps you had better look for someone else, Mrs. Hearst. I am so sorry. Mother says I must go to Mrs. Canning." Marie spoke in her native tongue, a sure sign, with her, of deep feeling. "Mrs. Hearst—I hate Mrs. Canning—I hate her! She is worse than we are—she is so loud and vulgar, and I shall become one of them. I want to become like no one but you! Oh, they are going to drag me down, deep, deep, right into the swamp of their lives. I came here and thought I had found a firm footing. I thought I could free myself—not from my people, I shall always love them—but from their way of life—their friends." The girl's tears were falling. Mrs. Hearst put one hand on Marie's shoulder and with the other lifted up her chin.

"Dear child, it's an age-old cry, this wanting to step up. And you shall. You shall not be sucked down."

Dolefully, Marie shook her head.

"Nonsense, my dear. You must not go to Mrs. Canning. You must come to me. And I shall help you. It's a bargain, little Marie. I need you and you need me. No one can prevent your coming to me if you are firm and insistent. Remember, you must not go back on me. I expect you this summer. When did your mother get this idea of your going to Mrs. Canning?"

"Mother just spoke of it yesterday."

"Well, run along now and don't worry. Just say that I am expecting you and that you are coming. Tell your mother that of course you will receive five dollars a month more this year. You are more experienced than you were last summer."

She stooped and kissed the girl, that she might not see her quick flush, but Marie's grateful eyes followed the woman when she turned and entered the house—for they both knew that the difficulty had been solved.

A few days after this Madame Fourchette said, "Take the horse and ride over to Mrs. Hearst for me. Ask her if she will lend me her hot water bottle and if she has any old sheets she could let me have."

Marie was always happy to have an opportunity of seeing her beloved Mrs. Hearst, but these errands had a bitter tang because of her mother's greed. She was forever saying, "Marie, ride over and get me some coffee," or sugar, or meat or whatever was her immediate need.

"But mamma, how can I?" Tears of mortification sprang to the girl's eyes.

"Betasse!" snapped her mother. "I will repay. I always do. You worked hard enough last harvest for her."

"I was more than rewarded," flashed the girl. "And you know you never give back."

"You and your pride," shrilled the woman. "Je te donnerai un soufflet." She was making rapid strides with her English, a born linguist, as were all her children, and in this respect Mrs. Canning was invaluable. Only when she became very much excited would she lapse from her halting English into her native tongue, or rather that of her husband; she herself was Flamande. By speaking English she had discovered that she could keep her husband dumbly enraged. That paid him back a bit.

Still Marie lingered.

"Go, I say." She stamped her foot, kneading viciously at the bread all the while. "You would see us starve or die before you would humble yourself. If you would think of your mother sometimes—but no, it is always your high and mighty friends."

The woman's voice trembled with self-pity.

"Oh, mother, I do think of you," protested Marie. "I'm so sorry."

"You'll need to be sorry," said the woman surlily. the flame of her anger burnt out. "Ah, Marie, you don't know the half I suffer. It is your father. He

never did consider me, but now he is awful. He is not himself and he is killing my three boys with work. He never speaks to me; just mumbles, mumbles to himself. And I am to help in the fields with the sowing this spring. In Canada the women do not work in the fields. And now, this——"

She indicated her full figure with floury hands. "I had hoped that all this was over for me."

"Oh, it is always 'this'," said Marie wearily, then, quickly suspicious—

"Why do you want the hot water bottle?"

"I cannot sleep at nights," said the woman. "Its warmth will comfort me and I may get some rest."

"But the old sheets," queried the girl, not yet satisfied.

"If you were as I am, and on your feet from dawn till dark, you would want your legs bandaged," answered the woman, crossly. "Now get along."

When Marie rode up to the kitchen door at Clovelly, Annie told her that Mrs. Hearst was in the living-room. As she crossed the sunny space to Mrs. Hearst, waiting with her face upturned to kiss her, she was acutely conscious of a stranger standing with Frank in front of the chesterfield. She was dressed for the first time in a cast-off pair of Mrs. Hearst's riding breeches and a khaki shirt open at the throat, and looked wholly adorable, but she felt embarrassed and glanced neither to the right nor to the left.

"Mrs. Hearst," she murmured, "I'm so sorry, but mamma—mamma would like to borrow your hot water bottle and some old sheets." Her eyes, dewy with the blush that suffused her, looked pleadingly at Mrs. Hearst, as if to say, "Don't imagine that I think this 'comme il faut'. I know it is shameful."

Mrs. Hearst, understanding how the girl felt, suffered almost as much at these requests as Marie did.

"Surely, dear," said Mrs. Hearst, quietly, "I'll speak to Annie." Then, raising her voice, she said—

"And now, little Marie, I want you to meet a real Mounted Policeman. This is Grange Houltain, the son of a dear friend of mine in England. Marie has all sorts of romantic notions about the North West Mounted Policeman," she laughed.

Marie looked at the man and at once forgot her shyness in her aroused interest, for she lacked self-consciousness to a remarkable degree. He stood, handsome in his dress uniform with its scarlet coat and blue breeches with their yellow stripes. His riding boots winked up at the brass buttons of his tunic which had caught the sun. He was the typical tanned, tall, well-knit Englishman of the service. His slim, brown, restless hands pulled at his capeskin gloves. Out of a forgotten past flashed the memory of the waiter on the boat with his thick hands and bunty thumbs. "He has such beautiful hands," thought Marie. "I like their expression."

They all talked for a moment or two—had she ridden over? Wasn't the day glorious? Mrs. Hearst left the room while they were talking, and came in, in a few minutes, with Marie's parcel.

"Won't you stay for luncheon, dear?" she asked the girl. "It is so many months since we have had a meal together."

But Marie declined. She wanted to get on her clumsy old horse and race across the sweet-smelling prairie by herself and think of this beautiful creature, of his triangular face, his long straight legs, his smile, when the tip of his tongue peeped out between his fine teeth beneath the little moustache, his kind, speckled brown eyes, the color of tobacco in a cigarette.

The door closed on her.

"Well, what do you think of Marie, Grange?" asked Mrs. Hearst, proudly. She had seen the look of startled admiration on the man's face as Marie had entered, the intense interest that the girl had aroused in him, and felt the same satisfaction as an artist would feel at beholding someone standing lost in wonder before one of his pictures.

"I—I'm speechless," laughed the young fellow, awkwardly.

"She is the girl who lived with us last fall, whom I told you about," Mrs. Hearst explained, squinting her eyes at the thread and needle she held up to the light of the window. Then, as she resumed her sewing—

"It is an amazing thing, how such parents could beget that girl. I have seen it happen repeatedly with the first-born. She is the eldest of seven," she interpolated, looking up. "I think that it is because they are the children of romance, rather than of marriage. They are treasured from their conception, carried near a heart warm with love and passion. This girl's mother, who has been very beautiful, is an ignorant, greedy Belgian, though, to give her her due, I must admit that she is greedy for her sons and not for herself. The father is a better type, but too obstinate to get along in an adopted country and, of course, like most obstinate people, stupid. He is a man who, somewhere in life, has taken the wrong turning and has been fretting ever since to find his way back. His eyes are old and haunted. He is killing his wife and family with over-work and his harshness will drive every child from the home; yet for all that, there is something pathetic about the man. This girl is the outstanding one of the family and she is wholly lovely, though they do say that one of her brothers is very clever at school. Marie has the keenest appreciation of beauty that I have come across in a long time."

"The girl is Mother's latest enthusiasm," said Frank, smiling.

"Yes, I know," said his mother as she stooped and took another shirt out of the mending basket, "but I get as much from the companionship as does Marie.

She brings a fresh viewpoint to my reading, and her judgment is almost unerring."

"And with this sense of beauty fostered, how do you think that she is going to put up with the grossness of her family?" protested Frank. "Is it wise, Mother?"

"I admit that it worries me," assented Mrs. Hearst. "The girl is so quick to learn. More than that—she is more adaptable than she is clever. When she worked for us, what a change in her table manners at the end of a few weeks! I had her eat with us to give her a chance."

"And the rest of the family eat like pigs," threw in her son. "How about that?"

"But she can't keep herself down because of her family," cried his mother, impatiently. "She must be true to herself. That is living. Each one must fulfil his own destiny. He cannot fit himself to the pattern of his family. No," she shook her head positively. "I am not going to have Marie wasted on some uncouth farmer who will not appreciate her. And you will admit that she is both sweet and beautiful."

"Oh, we admit that," cried both men in chorus.

Grange Houltain left a few minutes later.

"Marie has made a hit," said Frank to his mother, in a tone as if to say "now see what you have done".

"Nonsense," laughed Mrs. Hearst. "Marie is a child in that way."

"Marie is nearly eighteen now," said Frank gravely.

"I know, but what is eighteen?"

"Well, my most desperate love affair to date occurred when I was seventeen," grinned the man.

"And the object of it was twenty-six," said his mother, smiling.

"Just Grange's age," laughed Frank. "Well, at any rate it is fine to have good old Grange back again," he added, as he left the room.

CHAPTER IV.

MARIE had made a "hit", as Frank had said. Grange Houltain swung on his horse and cantered off briskly. He would like to overtake the girl, to see her deep blue eyes look up to his again with that quick interest, to hear her precise, half-halting English, to watch the little quiver of her white throat as she laughed. He saw her, just mounting a slight slope at the side of a slough, and urged his horse that he might catch up with her before she reached the clump of scrub and trees in the hollow beyond. Marie heard the beat of horse's hoofs. She turned and her heart leaped when she saw the rider.

"Miss Fourchette!" She reined in and waited for the man until he came alongside.

"I am riding your way," he said. "May we go together?"

"I would enjoy that," said Marie, simply. "It is so beautiful to-day that it is good to be with someone."

She liked him, then, thought the man.

"You like the country?" queried Grange, to make conversation. "You do not long for your own land?"

"Oh, I cherish my pictures of it," said Marie, thinking of her bright meadow, "but I would not want to go back. Only my father is what you call—home-

sick. My mother would rather be here, although it was she who did not want to come. And the little children, they are most of them at school now, and seem to forget that they were ever Belgians; but my poor father has no friends here. He seems to distrust everyone. He will not take advice. He works too hard."

"Has he any crop in?"

"Yes, he is planting forty acres. Oh, we have all worked, from early dawn until the end of the long twilight."

"It is strange," said Grange, "that it is your mother who likes it here. Usually it is the women who are conquered by the loneliness of the prairie. Every year we have to take far too many to the asylum. Only last week a woman went there. I shall never forget her. She had tried to kill herself several times. By the hour she would sit and say, 'Up to the house and down to the barn; up to the house and down to the barn'. When we were bringing her in a coyote howled.

"'There it is,' she said, 'Let us hurry and we shall catch it.' Her expression was eager and sane.

"'There is what?' I asked, leaning toward her.

"'That which I have lost. It is crying,' she said, then laughed foolishly, as one awakened suddenly answers you from out the memory of a dream. Yet that woman was a cultured easterner, a violinist of note, before she married and came out here."

"Poor soul," murmured Marie, "to live here, one must give oneself to the prairies utterly. That is what my father will not do. He does not want to give; he wants to take and the prairies will never reward those who do that to them. They would be better to leave the country. Canada at least will never be a country of braggarts. Nature is too big here. We cannot go in and conquer easily."

They rode along slowly. The first wild flowers in all their mad profusion were spilled over the ground.

"It seems a shame to have our horses step on these crocuses, doesn't it?" asked Grange. "Even if there are so many."

"Yes," laughed Marie, happily. "It is just as if the good God, in an excess of loving, had given them to us as an extra."

"As He gave you Mrs. Hearst when you came here," smiled her companion.

"Ah, Mrs. Hearst is no extra," said Marie seriously. "She was so necessary to me; as the sun and rain and good soil are to a plant. Without knowing her I should have shrivelled up and been nothing, but now I feel as if I shall push up into the sunshine and see the whole world!"

Unconsciously the girl raised herself in the stirrups and looked exultantly down at her companion.

"Ah, little Marie, you lovely, lovely," thought the man, his blood pounding through him. Their eyes caught and held each other. For a long minute they

gazed, telling each other more than either dreamed, then Marie slumped down in her saddle clenching the horn to still the tingling in her palms. They rode on for a few minutes in silence. At length Grange spoke—

"I must take the turn at the road here. I go on duty shortly."

They reined in their horses and Marie held out her hand.

"Little Marie," said the man, as he took it and looked into her beautiful face, now masked and inscrutable, "may I come to see you—very soon?"

Poor Marie. It was like the awakening from a wonderful dream to a miserable reality. He saw her wince, the wide eyes narrow with pain. He remembered Frank's words, "her family eat like pigs". He could picture to himself their home. He had seen others like it.

"I go to Edmonton in a little while," he continued, "When I return the wild roses will be out. Let me be the first to show them to you. We shall go for a long ride."

"I can't," said the girl, miserably, "my father keeps us working all the time."

"In the evening, then. Must we never see each other any more?"

Marie looked up, startled.

"Oh, not that," she said, naively.

"Then what else can we do?" he argued, "but meet in the evening?"

"But I can't have the horse," she said. "I am only allowed to have it now because I am on an errand and father wasn't around."

"I'll bring one. A real horse, and we'll gallop right into the sunset. Oh, little Marie, come with me to-morrow evening," he urged softly. His eyes adored her.

Burning fire swept through her, seeming to melt her very bones. She looked up, fear of herself, of him, in her eyes.

"It will be all right, Marie, you know that, don't you?" he gently reassured her.

Pulling herself together, she said briskly—

"Yes, of course. I'm being very silly. I shall come."

"Good," cried Grange gaily as he wheeled his horse about. "Will you walk along the blue trail to meet me? I may be a little late."

She knew that he was making it easy for her, and nodded happily.

"I may be a little late, too," she called, "it depends on father. Wait for me by the scrub."

Marie turned to the other trail, and the horse loped heavily along while the girl, with bent head, pondered on this new joy that had come into her life. Little swirls of dust eddied about the horse's feet; he shook his head and sneezed. The girl looked up. The whole land had gone grey. Gone the light of the sky and the crocuses. The mountains were blotted

out. A miniature cyclone of dust, as high as the telegraph post, swirled past her. The wind leaped upon her like a wild thing, clawing at her hair. Ahead, a wall of dust advanced and she was in it. Girl and horse battled, unable to turn against the force of the storm. In the brown darkness, the horse lost its sense of direction and plunged, tossing and spluttering. There was a roar, two lights flashed out not the length of the horse ahead of them and a motor car plunged past. The horse, by its sudden spring, saved them. Then, heads low, the horse and rider dashed on.

"If I stick to the road nothing can happen," thought Marie.

She did not know whether she was going to or from her home. Had the horse turned when it whirled aside for the car? The acrid dust gritted on her teeth and stung into her eyeballs. The horse tossed, pulling at her arms, snorting and choking. Then, just as suddenly as the wind sprang up, it dropped. The sun came out with a sheepish grin as if to say, "Why, what is all the trouble? Everything seems all right."

The sand lay piled in drifts along the fences, filling the road in spots and the little sod hut was not a hundred yards distant.

"Ugh," shuddered the girl, as she shoved back her gritty hair. She saw her father run madly from the cowshed to the nearest field, and across its uneven surface, like a wounded animal looking for cover.

Instinctively she knew that the seeding of many acres had been in vain. It had all been blown out.

Marie was thankful, later, that her father was engrossed with this new trial. It kept him away from the house. Mrs. Canning came out as Marie reached the door.

"Marie, run in to your mother, honey, she's not well. I must be going."

"What's wrong?" asked Marie, quickly.

"Oh, I can't wait to explain, dearie," said Mrs. Canning, hastily. "I must get back, but take good care of her. Keep her feet up a little." The woman shifted the comb in her hair and, turning, mounted her horse, that stood patiently waiting with hanging reins.

Marie dashed indoors.

"Is that you, Marie?" called her mother, her voice high with pain. "Where is Mrs. Canning?"

"She's gone."

"Gone! Didn't she stay?"

"No," said Marie, shortly. "She said she was in a hurry. What is wrong?"

Marie glanced down at the woman. One look at the grey face frightened her.

"Mamma," she cried, in distress, "what have you done?"

The figure on the bed began to whimper.

"I thought that Mrs. Canning would stay. You'll have to get Mrs. Hearst."

Marie flung open the door.

"Gabriel, Gabriel, quick, quick!" she called, shrilly. The boy, just home from school, came running.

"Get on the horse and go for Mrs. Hearst. Ask her to come in their car. Mother is sick."

She turned into the room again. Low, whining moans came from the bed. The girl beat her hands together in her impotence. "Oh, God, what should I do, what should I do?" she prayed in frenzy. The moaning would rise every now and then to a little wail. The girl would rock back and forth in terror. At length Marie heard the welcome sound of a car on the road, and Mrs. Hearst hurried in, a small bag in her hand.

"Where is she, child?" she asked quickly. "Has that Canning woman been here?"

Marie nodded dumbly, and saw Mrs. Hearst's lips tighten.

"I'll have that woman put in jail yet," she said tersely. It was not the first time that she had had to labour to save a victim of Mrs. Canning's ministrations.

"I telephoned the doctor before I left," she told Marie. "He'll be here at any time." Then she set to work with her patient.

Henri Fourchette, returning from a survey of his fields, met the doctor coming out of the house, who explained the situation to him. Like a fury, the Belgian tore into the house. White with rage, his

fists with thumbs tight clenched beating the air, he poured a volley of abuse at his helpless wife. "Murderess," he cried, "murderess!"

His wife moved restlessly.

"Stop your nonsense," said Mrs. Hearst, speaking to him quickly in French. "How do you know you are not the murderer, making your wife work in the fields in her condition. We do not do that in this country. What right have you to impose more child-bearing on her, anyway, if she doesn't want any more children? Hasn't she borne enough for you to work to death? Get out of the house, or I'll have you arrested."

The man's jaw dropped, and he shuffled quickly out. This was a queer land. They *might* arrest him. But most of the night he walked up and down in front of the little hut, exclaiming—

"What a country; everything goes against me. Where shall I find seed for all my ploughed acres. A country where no one has a sense of duty, no sense of duty to one's husband, to one's father, to one's God! Murderess. Murderess." And, indoors, Marie toiled through the night with Mrs. Hearst, feeding the children and getting them to bed quietly, working over the sick woman. By morning Madame Fourchette was out of danger, but must be kept very quiet. All night Marie had clung to her Rosary, praying in the quiet moments for her mother. As Mrs. Hearst kissed the girl at leaving, Marie said—

"Was it a very wicked thing that my mother did; will she get absolution?"

"I don't know about absolution, dear," said Mrs. Hearst, her heart wrung with pity by the girl's white face. "When you get older, you will understand a little better a woman's dread of bringing an unwanted child into the world; and God, who is as old as time, how great must be his understanding and pity."

Henri Fourchette took the milk to town himself that day. He had to buy more seed-grain, on credit, until they could make money at the harvest time. His long absence was a merciful relief for the whole family. When he came in for his supper, he glowered but said never a word. Marie felt bitterly sorry for him. She, herself, fretted about the immorality of her mother's act. What, then, must it be to her father, the only really devout Catholic in the family? And to have it happen after the tragic dust storm! He seemed to sense something of the girl's pity. Twice their eyes met, and once she smiled hesitatingly. He rose abruptly from the table and, with mumblings and headshakings, went to the cowshed and sat on the little milking stool just inside the doorway. So, many hours after it grew dark, he would sit out there, gazing broodingly towards the mountains, and the moon would ride high in the clear cobalt sky and turn the prairie land into a thing of such witching beauty that drove the man to frenzy, like a lovely woman passionately desired yet perpetually denied.

"Gabriel," said Marie, softly lest she disturb her mother, who was sleeping, "have you finished the chores?"

"Finished the chores?" said the boy, bitterly. "Does one ever finish the chores? No, I have to water the horses yet."

"When you finish, will you come and sit with mother? She won't wake up for a long time yet and the children are in bed."

"What for; what are you going to do?"

"I want to go out for a little fresh air. I've been in the house all day."

"Oh, all right," said the boy, grudgingly. "I'll be back in a few minutes. We have to start seeding again to-morrow, and father says that I can't hire out until it's finished. It won't take long. He's keeping the youngsters home from school to help. He'll get into trouble yet for that and serve him right. Tom Canning is coming over to help. He rode over a few minutes ago to say his mother wanted him to give us a day. He keeps every cent he earns for himself. He is going away after the harvest is over."

"Then, that will be good riddance to bad rubbish," said Marie, shortly.

"What's wrong with him?" asked Gabriel, angrily.

"I suppose he isn't good enough for you? You're getting too stuck up for anything since you worked at Hearst's last summer."

"Ugh," shuddered Marie. "He makes me sick with his pasty face and freckled hands. I hate his green eyes."

"That's a good one on you," giggled Gabriel. "He tells everybody that you are his girl."

Marie's eyes blazed.

"Me!" she cried, her face crimson with rage. "How dare he? Me!"

"Well, who are *you*?" asked Gabriel, coolly. "Because you were Hearst's servant last year, don't imagine that you're the Queen of Belgium. Everybody looks down on people in service here."

"Oh, go, do, and fix the horses," urged Marie, her voice unsteady, "or I'll never get out."

She turned and looked out of the little window when her brother left the room. The prairie ran out to the dust-drenched sun that hung low in the mountain-tipped sky, flaming red clouds arched high above the dun grey land, bathing it in coloured light. The water in the half-dry slough, with its encrusted edges, lay richly red, as if it were the last of the must from which the wine of evening had been fined. Marie, for all the glory, did not want to go out now.

"Who are you!"

Who was she indeed? And all this day, at her overlapping, unending tasks, with what mad dreams had she, Mrs. Hearst's servant, been living? How silly she had been when she had said, "I shall push up into the sunshine and see the whole world." How

could she ever step clear of the bog of her family? She would always be sucked back into it.

A tall figure, leading two horses, was silhouetted against the sky-line, then dipped towards the poplar brush. She heard Gabriel throwing horseshoes in the yard by the door. She slipped out, calling softly, "I'm going now," and sped from the house as from a terror.

What a ride they had! Marie scarcely spoke as Grange greeted her. She felt almost that she should be humbling herself to him, should be saying, "I know I am all unworthy to ride with you. I realize that this is just an act of gracious kindness to a poor and lonely girl. I have dishonoured you in dreaming of you all day, I, 'the girl' of a creature like Tom Canning." And her newly awakened heart was saying, as he took off his hat, "How tall he is, so straight and beautiful. How like a wild bird's wings his shining hair!"

They galloped into the west, as they had planned. The light, soft spring of Marie's horse beneath her was like magic to the girl. She felt one with the beautiful animal, as if she herself, in the seven-leagued boots of fairy tales, were stepping so fleetly and lightly over the ground. The sunset that she had seen from her window became wilder, more lurid. Marie thought exultingly, "How can it matter what I was born? To us, who can see such beauty, surely we are the gods of the earth." She glanced at her companion. His

face was turned to her, aglow with delight at the exercise, the vivid beauty of the girl, the glory of the evening. They reined in their horses.

"That was splendid," panted Marie. "I never knew what riding was before."

They looked around on the fading world. The night closed over them like a great opal-tinted shell. They had turned and were walking their horses home.

"The sky seems the only important thing on the prairies. It is always that at which I look, as if the earth were of no importance save to hold up its great dome," said Marie.

"Then you must see the sky up north, sometime," Grange said, eagerly. "When the northern lights are showing. They come like gorgeous coloured ribbons, from the edge of the world, and seem to tie in a knot high above your head, festooning the sky. The air is still and bitterly cold and the lights crack and dance across the heavens. Huskies buried deep in snow, for warmth, whimper through the little holes their warm breath has made, and the iron shackles of frost seem to creak as they tighten about the world. Then, indeed, the earth seems to become of no importance. There is just the sky."

"Were you ever stationed up north?" asked Marie.

"No," he replied, shortly. "I was sent up on a job."

He could not tell her of that awful journey of twelve hundred miles in the bitter cold. Of the man,

insane from loneliness, whose safe arrival at the Asylum was entrusted to him; of how the man had become violent and had to be strapped to the sleigh and forcibly fed. He could not tell of the long, cold days from dawn to dusk when his own cry, "Mush!" and the ravings of a lunatic were the only sound to break the stillness; of the nights and the northern lights and the loneliness that hurt. By the time the pair had arrived at Edmonton, Grange Houltain was still mechanically performing services for the man entrusted to his care, but he was obsessed by the idea that he had failed. At the barracks he paced his room, repeating over and over to himself or the doctor details of the trip, trying to prove to himself that failure had been unavoidable.

"Don't let him harp on the thing," the doctor had said with a wise air. "He needs sleep, he has not slept for days; he will go crazy himself if he does not get it." The nurses had tried to distract his tortured mind. Then had come Mrs. Hearst. She had taken the boy into her arms and comforted him.

"Now tell me all about it," she urged. "Every little bit." And he had talked and talked and peace had come into his eyes and he had lain down and slept. But, then, it was just one incident, one little incident, in the long and noble annals of a gallant company.

"Why did you come from England," asked Marie. "You were not like us, so very poor and with a large family to feed. We had to come and if it were not

for my unhappy father, I would be glad. But you must have been very happy when you were a boy in England."

"How do you know that, little Marie?" Grange asked, smilingly.

"Because you have a shining look," the girl answered, soberly. "We, who have unhappy childhoods, always have a scarred look when we grow up."

Grange Houltain looked with interest at the girl. Her power of keen observation won his admiration.

"Yes, I had a very happy boyhood," he said. "We were a small family; just my mother, my sister and myself. My mother's people have always been army people. My father was in the army in India when he died. Of course, I must be a soldier and all my schooling was to that end.

"Shortly after I got my commission in the Welsh Fusiliers, we were sent into Lancashire to quell the strike riots. The whole thing sickened me. When I saw the half-starved men and women who were paying taxes to help keep up our own jingling magnificence, I felt that they were more or less justified in striking. At any rate, I resolved that when the trouble was over I would quit. If that was to be the job for our glorious regiments, then the day of the glorious regiments was over. It is one thing to be prepared to strike at a foreign foe, but it is another to be a weapon to be used against your down-trodden countrymen, especially when you feel that they are paying the piper as well.

My mother, naturally I suppose, was very angry. That was the hardest part of the whole thing. We had been such jolly pals before. She had always had the impression that I thought as she did about such things. I had foolishly avoided stating my real views for fear of giving her pain. The whole thing was a great shock to her. The more we talked and argued, the more aware she became of how utterly at variance were our ideas. The upshot of it all was that I came to Canada. For a man trained for soldiering this was the only solution. As I said, the day of war is over; the Nations of the world would not risk their industrialism by fighting each other, and I am certainly not going to fight non-combatant fellow citizens."

He spoke hotly. He always looked upon his trip to Lancashire as the most shameful thing in his life. He had been ashamed of himself, his regiment and his country.

"But there will still be war," said Marie, decidedly.

"Why do you think that, little Marie?" asked Grange, smiling tolerantly.

"Ah, you smile," she said, quickly, her English becoming more difficult in her sincerity. "But one does not live in Belgium and think that war is a thing lightly waived away by a few rich men. The *feel* of war is always with us, because, I suppose, our land is soaked with blood. So often has it been the battle ground of nations. And war is a part of, how shall I

say it—young human nature, in early times——” her lovely brows puckered in distress.

“Primitive,” helped Grange.

“Yes, yes—primitive human nature, like searching for food, providing shelter and having children—and it will be with us many years yet.”

“Don’t you count on our civilization to keep us out of such a mess?” queried Grange.

“It is easier to get rid of the civilized things than it is of the old primitive impulses,” answered Marie, pleased with the use of the new word. “You will yet be shown that the existence of your regiment is justified.” Grange laughed. But later, in France, when he heard his Colonel’s last words, “Stick it, Welsh,” the scene flashed across his mind.

“Little Marie,” he cried, “what books is Mrs. Hearst lending you?”

“Oh, any I choose, provided I read the ones that she selects for me as well,” cried the girl, eagerly. “But I’m afraid that I miss a great deal by jumping around at them so. I peck at this and then at that. I am like a hen who has had the dish of grain spilt over it. I am dashing here and there and squawking about, and don’t know which kernel to pick up first. I want them all at once. Sometimes I grab at a silly story book and sometimes at a wonderful one, and then it will be someone very learned. Sometimes it is poetry. I love that—by Mr. Browning or someone.”

Grange Houltain looked at the adorable figure on the slim, brown horse. The dusk made her a warm blur beside him. Never before had he taken such delight in a woman, for woman she was for all her seventeen years.

"And what do you think of Mr. Browning?" he asked, smiling.

"Well," she hesitated, fearing for a second that this magnificent creature was making fun of her. Then her lack of self-consciousness came to her aid again.

"Sometimes I think he is very wise and wonderful, and sometimes I understand him not at all, and then again I call him Grandpa Pollyanna. Now there is a silly story book for you, like sugar on your meat instead of salt."

Grange laughed aloud and then sobered.

"Oh, little Marie!" he said. "I have heard of you for a year and wasted all this time in not knowing you."

The tenderness that crept into his voice caught at Marie's heart.

"I must hurry back now," she said, quickly. "My mother is ill," and as she cantered swiftly through the late twilight, she heard in her heart Gabriel's voice gibing her—"And who are you?"

Finally she reined in, Grange close beside her. "Oh, it has been splendid, hasn't it?" she said. "And this horse——" Her hard little hand caressed its silky neck. Suddenly, as at their last meeting, their

eyes met and seemed to draw each other. The blood drained from Marie's face. "If I take her in my arms now, she will love me forever," thought the man, and his arms ached for her, but his mother's training made him conscious of who this girl was; and he knew that because of her beauty, her purity, her worthiness, he could commit no ignoble act against her.

"Shall I take you home now?" he asked, rather awkwardly. Marie blushed painfully, but answered, "I would rather you left me here. Father is very irritable and mother is ill. It is not easy for me to have anyone at our home." Her frankness gave the situation dignity.

Several more rides they had. Then one night, before they parted, Grange said, "I go to Edmonton in the morning, little Marie, and will not be back until July. By then, when we ride across the prairies, they will be blushing with wild roses."

"I shall be at Mrs. Hearst's," said Marie, happily.

The man's brows knit. That would make fresh difficulties. But, after all, why should it? He meant the girl no harm. She was accepted at Clovelly almost as one of the family.

"Then we shall dine together there, the first night I am home," he said. "And if Mrs. Hearst can spare you, we shall have our ride."

Marie nodded radiantly as she dismounted.

"Until I come back, then," he said, as he rode away.

CHAPTER V.

MARIE'S mother made a slow recovery. Her inactivity worried her husband, who took out his ill temper on the children, cuffing and hitting at them perpetually. He threatened to horse-whip Jacques for his failure to accomplish a task beyond his years and strength, and Marie, her heart warm and her courage high since her evenings with Grange Houltain, had stood in front of the screaming child and dared her father to strike. The stinging lash fell across her shoulders and, like a flaming fury, she had wrenched the whip from the man, her knuckles white as she clenched both ends of it lest she strike her father.

"Go," she had said hoarsely. "Go away from me. You will never strike a child in this house again. Gabriel and I will see to that." And he never did. With his hurried, stumbling gait he had gone to the cowshed and stayed for hours mumbling to himself. From that day he seemed to be an outcast. The family gave the last ounce of their strength to him in labour, but in all else they ignored him; and he was afraid to assert his authority lest he suffer a second defeat.

Gabriel, now fourteen, was to work for a neighbour about five miles distant until the harvest, when he and Tom Canning were to join a harvest gang. Though he was young, the boy was recognized as a hard worker and worth twice as much as some of the men. Also, he had a way with horses, for he loved them.

Marie was loath to leave her mother when the time came for her to go to Mrs. Hearst. The woman was slow in gaining back her strength and vivacity, and her white face was a reproach to her daughter. Moreover, Marie had learnt much of homemaking the summer before and had done wonders in making the little place habitable. She dreaded seeing the house lapse back into the untidy hovel it used to be, for her mother, unlike most of her countrywomen, was one of those houseworkers who create more confusion than they can clear up.

"I wish I weren't going," said Marie, as she gathered together the clothes that Mrs. Hearst had given her the year before and which she had carefully put away for the winter.

"Why?" asked her mother, disinterestedly. She was sitting at the end of the table drinking a bowl of coffee and her heart was heavy at the thought of Gabriel's departure. Even Paul was going away to work and she was a woman who loved only her sons.

Marie realized perfectly how superfluous she was in her mother's life, but that did not rid her of a sense of responsibility towards her.

"But what about father? Suppose he makes you go out and work in the fields again? You fainted the last time; or if he should whip one of the children?"

"You think that you are the only one that can do anything with your father, don't you?" sneered her mother. "I admit you are the only one of them all that he ever noticed, though the good Lord knows why that should be. But do not be afraid. I can handle your father now. He will never lay hands on a child of mine again, nor on me unless I say so."

"What would you do, mother? If Gabriel were here it would be different."

"Do? What I should have done years ago. I can control him now because I don't want to please him. And he's going queer. You watch—he's not himself at all."

After this, Marie's heart lightened. She looked forward eagerly to the days ahead of her. Mr. Hearst was to call for her in the motor, for he was driving out from Calgary. She petted her little sisters and the baby Jean, now toddling about; made a cake, a wild extravagance in the family, and given them each the last bath that they would have until she got back to do it again. She was happier than ever before at leaving the wee things. Her mother was much more patient with them now that she was freed of the burden of perpetual child-bearing. Her father would leave them alone, and they could roll and tumble on the sun-baked prairie all day long like a little family of

gophers. At last Marie saw the car coming along the road several miles away. As she tied up her bundle her mother looked up.

"You're seventeen now," she said, "and a good worker. See that Mrs. Hearst gives you another five dollars a month."

"But she *is*, mamma, and she gives me all my clothes."

"Because she dresses you up in clothes too good for you doesn't help me, does it? It's money I want, and if you can't get it working there you'll go some place else for it. I'll speak to Mr. Hearst when he comes if you won't ask for it."

"All right, I will," replied Marie, hurriedly.

"And about Tom Canning," went on her mother. "Gabriel says that you have got so high up with yourself that you will scarcely speak to him when he comes here, and it is time you thought of things."

"Well, when I do think of things," said Marie, indignantly, "it will not be of Tom Canning. Ugh—he makes me sick. Imagine being married to him. I never could. He makes me think of that man on the boat." Marie shuddered visibly, and her mother chuckled.

"You're still thinking of that waiter," she laughed. "You'll get used to that sort of thing from men; they are all the same."

"They are not!" flashed Marie, indignantly.

"How do you know they are not?" asked the older woman quickly. "What do you know of men and their ways? If there are any men you know and you think that they are not like that, you are in a fair way of getting into trouble," she said, thinking of Frank Hearst. "I should know if anyone should," she concluded, bitterly.

Marie knew that all men were not vile. She knew that her mother lied. But all things sacred to the girl that came in contact with her home seemed to become besmirched as one standing by a mud hole may get splashed.

"If it's that Frank Hearst—" began her mother again, and Marie, crimson with shame of the woman who had borne her, cried—

"Oh, mother, stop! It is no one."

"Then why won't you have anything to do with Tom? You need to bring yourself down a little. Tom is a fine boy, and I want no nonsense from you. You give him a chance to marry you, then he will help Gabriel get jobs and give your father a day's work now and then, and help us build a house next year. You never think of us. It is always yourself."

Mr. Hearst honked loudly and, hurriedly kissing the children and her mother, the girl picked up her bundle and ran out. As she stepped into the car she noticed the first deep bud of a wild rose at the roadside. Oh, all men were not alike!

Marie's happiness in being at Clovelly again was overclouded that June. The whole country was praying for rain. May had been dry, but few had worried. "It is the June rains we want," Frank would say. "Give us June rains and the world is ours." But June came and the sun rose and travelled through the clear cloudless sky sinking, a glory, behind the blue mountains. Sometimes the heavens would darken, the barometer fall, and hopes rise; but they would soon be dashed. It would be nothing but a fierce dust storm. The sloughs dried up and water for the cattle became a problem. Mr. Hearst had to have a new well dug for his stock. The heat quivered across the sparse fields and grey prairies, and settlers' hearts grew homesick and sore with the oft recurring memories of green meadows, singing streams and water lapping on the shores of lakes; of deep forests with dew heavy on the ground. But the wonder of the sunrise and sunsets, of the level distances and rolling hills, of the awe-inspiring and inscrutable mountains lying heavy on the rim of the world, caught again at their hearts and men went about muttering—

"I *will* make it go. I can't leave this. I could never live back there again."

It was not as bad for the people at Clovelly as it was for most of the farmers. They had already given up the idea of depending on wheat entirely. They had cattle and could count on a sure revenue from the milk despite droughts and early frosts; enough green feed

could always be raised for this. Potatoes, too, were a good crop in a country that knew not the pest of the potato bug; and turkeys thrive on the dry prairies, finding a ready market in the East, where sudden storms and heavy showers make it difficult to raise them. They had come to Canada with a small income. Now they were rich. But with a wheat farmer, a year like this spelt disaster.

Marie had been taken into the family more than ever. Frank paid much more attention to her for one thing. The year before she had seemed to him just a child, a fad of his mother's, but she had developed amazingly in the last twelve months. They played tennis and rode together, and Marie, because she was beloved by all of them, lost her diffidence, as Mrs. Hearst had hoped she would, and entered into their discussions, holding her own part well.

"When do you get time for your reading?" asked Frank. "Your father leaves you no leisure."

"Oh, I don't know," answered Marie. "If one loves reading, one finds time. If one does not, one says, 'Oh, I enjoy it so much, but I never have time'. I read when I take the milk in to Crosston, and when I knit, and when I dress, or when I'm waiting for the men to come in for their meals, or for the kettle to boil, and in the evenings when I get through my work early and there is no bread to set."

Allan, Frank's brother, came down from Calgary bringing a party of seven for the week-end. Marie

was aghast when Mrs. Hearst told her that she wanted her to meet these people and help in their entertainment. The year before, child that she was, she had fled to the kitchen and Annie at these visitations.

"You are like a dear daughter to me, Marie," the older woman had said, "and you must not deprive me of the pleasure of treating you as such. I had always hoped to have a girl like you who would receive my guests with me and be just such a treasure in our home."

And so Marie, in her new mauve gingham, and looking far lovelier than she ever dreamed, had stood on the wide verandah and received the guests with Mrs. Hearst.

"One of my neighbour's daughters," they were told. She had shown the girls to their rooms, chatting shyly with them. She played tennis with the party, rode with them and, with that quick familiarity of the west, they were soon calling her by her first name and laughingly refusing to answer her unless she did likewise.

Sunday afternoon the whole party had gathered on the verandah for tea. Marie, in the act of handing someone a cup, looked up and saw Tom Canning riding towards the house. It was the second time he had come. The last time she had hidden herself and no one had understood why the man had come, for he had not asked to see her. She slipped over to Frank with a plate of sandwiches and said quietly—

"Frank, there is Tom Canning coming. Please go down and tell him that I'm busy and cannot see him, or he will come right up here and that would be awful. Tell him that I will go home next Sunday and see him there."

"Tom Canning?" said Frank, in surprise and disgust. "Lord, do you like him?"

"I loathe him," said the girl, quickly, "but he keeps saying that I am his girl, and mamma likes him."

"Yes, righto, I see, old thing. I'll fix it."

In a few minutes Marie saw Frank saunter down the lane that led to the road to intercept the rider, who, after a few words, turned and rode away. She met Frank at the kitchen door as he came back.

"That was good of you," she cried.

"I say," asked Frank, seriously, "he doesn't bother you at all, does he?"

Marie shook her head. "No," she answered. "I have always been able to avoid him. I hid down the cellar and washed all the fruit jars the last time that he was here."

"Well, see that you always do avoid him," said Frank. "He is rather a rotter, you know."

"He keeps talking about me to Gabriel and mother, and they worry me about him," explained Marie.

"Well, Marie, steer clear of him," cautioned Frank.

When Frank and Marie went out on the verandah again, the company was speculating on the promise of rain in the big, dark clouds that were rolling up.

"Don't say rain," wailed one of the girls. "The roads will be in a terrible condition. What a trip home we shall have."

"Don't say rain!" They jumped at her words to a man. "A June rain, and the country like this?"

The big drops began to fall, one by one, heavily, then in level sheets, blotting out the whole landscape.

"Come back," cautioned Mrs. Hearst to Constance Howard, whose soft golden curls and fine skin proclaimed her a new-comer to Alberta, where the alkaline water and strong sun ravages the beauty of its women. But the girl continued to stand by the railing, and let the drops pelt her.

"Oh, please, Mrs. Hearst," she laughed. "I just love it. I come from England, you know, and the rain doesn't wet me." She threw up her arms, her whole body seemed to be drinking in the moisture. "I have felt as if I were warping since I have come to this dry prairie of yours," she said.

The men were wildly hilarious. "A million dollar rain," they cried. Brokers or lawyers, doctors or merchants, it made no difference. There was prosperity for none unless the wheat grew, and the talk ran to the wheat prices and elevators, the number of bushels to the acre, the number of acres seeded down. For an hour the downpour lasted, then the clouds broke and the pale sun shone forth. Before the thirsting earth had had an opportunity to drink in half it needed, the high, dry altitude and the hot sun had licked up

the moisture. Only a few puddles shone here and there, and the sloughs which had been caked and white were black with mud.

Marie was glad when the last car drove away. She had enjoyed herself, she had been a success, but it had been a strain. Mrs. Hearst, sensing something of what the girl had been going through, turned impulsively to her and kissed her.

"My dear, I was so proud of you!"

Marie smiled happily. Commendation from her beloved Mrs. Hearst always warmed her heart.

"Marie takes her conquests lightly," laughed Mr. Hearst, "which makes the men keen."

"And keeps the girls her friends," threw in Frank, laughingly.

"What did you think of the girls, dear?" asked Mrs. Hearst, curiously.

Marie hesitated.

"They were a little hard to talk to," she answered "We lead such different lives. Theirs are filled with dances and shows and wonderful clothes, and of these things I know nothing and cannot talk."

"You and Constance Howard seemed to hit it off," threw in Frank.

"The little girl from England, who liked the rain," smiled Marie. "But she did not talk so much of clothes and dances. She spoke of politics and books. We talked of Belgium, where she had been, and of how the settlers, like my family, start their lives out here.

She talks as if she had been set down in an interesting world. The others, as if an interested world had been set down around them."

They all laughed.

"Leave it to Marie to weed them out," said Mr. Hearst, delightedly. "Constance is a very delightful girl."

"Yes, such a pity that Grange is away. Poor Grange. Things never work out just right for him," said Mrs. Hearst. "Here comes this charming girl, a life-long friend, of whom he is forever talking, to visit in Calgary, and he is whisked off to Edmonton."

"Well," said her husband, "I heard her say that he was going to have a few days in Calgary on his way back and he will be here in a week."

Marie began to straighten about the chairs. What matter if the roses were blooming on the prairies now? Oh, she had seemed to know so much about this man as they rode over the prairies those wonderful nights, and he had talked to her in her own language, of England and his home there; and she knew nothing. She was an outsider. All these people, this girl with her golden curls, were his own world, where he would stay, leaving it just occasionally to be kind to the Belgian immigrant. "Me, with my head as black as a crow," she thought, bitterly. "And I imagined that he thought I was pretty!"

The week that followed for Marie was a restless one. Every rider that appeared on the horizon looked like

Grange and her heart would leap high. Then she would force herself to think of Constance Howard, whereupon she would upbraid herself fiercely.

"Why shouldn't he love her?" she would say to herself. "She is so beautiful. She knows his English mother and his sister. What would they think if he wrote: 'Mother, I love a Belgian peasant girl who lives in a sod hut, but she can read and write a little, and can add a column of figures if it is not too long. She is very poor and a servant in the home of your friend, Mrs. Hearst'."

"Never, never will I ride with him again. I cannot think of anything but those wonderful evenings."

The continued drought was also a great worry to the girl. If they had no crop this year, the family would be facing absolute want. True, there would be her earnings, and Gabriel, Paul and her father would work, but they owed for seed and some groceries; the children had few clothes; and where would they find money for coal. If only Sunday's rain had not been so cruelly short! But the sun rode high in the hot sky, while the earth cracked and thirsted. Little swirling cyclones of dust tore across the land for a few yards and subsided, as if all efforts in this land were useless. There would be no coffee this winter, that mainstay of the Belgians. She wondered if the potatoes would stand up against the drought, and the rest of their vegetables, which she and her mother had tended with back-breaking care? They had lived well

in this new land last year, but now—what were they eating at home now? And as she sat at the well-appointed table at Clovelly and ate daintily of its plentiful fare, she had a better understanding of her own people. They were of the earth and toiling slowly up. They ate food for which their bodies hungered—to which their palates were indifferent. They ate, not prettily, as an art, but as a people who demand hungrily and desperately that which they have wrested from the earth by sweating labour. She wanted to gather up the left-overs from this rich man's table and see little Jacques' and Bébe's eyes sparkle at the sight of such dainties. She had blushed when her mother had emptied the sugar basin on the boat, and hated her for it, but now she could understand something of it.

One morning Mrs. Hearst came into the big kitchen where Marie was baking. "Ah," she said. "That is just what I thought you would be doing." She braced her body to keep the door from banging, as the hot chinook wind raced through the outer door at it. "Isn't it too hot for you this morning? I believe I would keep that porch door closed. The wind comes in like a blast from a furnace. There is a quality about this wind we have, like the khamsin. We should all go to bed when it springs up. It gets on my nerves until I could scream, and I feel good for nothing. What has Annie got you baking this morning? You have certainly turned into a wonderful cook, little Marie."

"Oatmeal cookies," said the girl, as she deftly rolled the dough thin.

"You must like to bake, you do it so superlatively well."

Marie looked up happily. Mrs. Hearst and Grange Houltain were the only people who called her "Little Marie", and for this reason she loved the name.

"I do enjoy it, Mrs. Hearst," she said. "It is about the only kind of housework that makes me feel that I am really making something, building up something, you know——?" she puckered her brows.

"Creating," helped Mrs. Hearst. "That is the sign of the real artist."

"When I wash the dishes I think, 'I wash these that they may be dirtied again, and when I dust, or sweep, or tidy, it is the same thing. But when I bake I think, 'Here is something that smells good, tastes good and looks good. It will build up strong bodies for the people I love and I am helping to keep the Hearsts in the world.'"

Mrs. Hearst laughed merrily. "You are a dear child, little Marie," she said. "But see that you make those cookies particularly good for Grange Houltain is coming at the end of the week and he is very fond of them. Put in plenty of date filling. Constance Howard may be along, too. I told Grange, in my letter, to bring her."

Marie's heart leaped. She would see Grange again, but with this other girl. That would be bitter, indeed.

"I think you met Grange here," went on Mrs. Hearst. "He's a splendid chap. His mother and I are old friends; she was my bridesmaid."

Marie murmured in the affirmative. She wanted to tell Mrs. Hearst of her rides with Grange, feeling that there was something underhand in not so doing, but the fact that it had meant so much to her made it impossible to treat it as a casual thing, and now the presence of this English girl in his life made her self-conscious about it.

"Mrs. Hearst will imagine that I think it a very important thing if I speak of it," she thought, uncomfortably.

The elder woman passed out to the back porch, where Annie was, to give some directions and Marie's opportunity was gone.

She would not have her ride alone with Grange; that was a sad disappointment. Until now she had not realized how much she had looked forward to it, and a queer empty feeling was about her heart at the thought of Constance Howard. Constance, with her lovely golden hair; Constance, who had gone to school, who knew his mother. Ah, his mother! How she feared his mother. Tears shadowed her eyes as she thoughtfully scraped the dough from the rolling pin. Where in all this world would she not feel an outsider? Certainly she was not one of them at home—nor here. She sighed and set about clearing away the baking

things. But Grange was coming. She would see him. Nothing could alter that.

The next afternoon Grange arrived. Marie had been in the barn-yard feeding the chickens and shutting the wee ones into their coops. She went through the henhouse gathering the eggs and came out, a heavy pailful dragging at her arms. Her heart leaped when she saw Grange's horse standing by the verandah. He had come, and surely he must have come alone! The girl hurried to the house and, entering by the kitchen door, slipped into her bedroom, off the little breakfast room. She must tidy herself. She washed, dabbed her nose with the powder that Mrs. Hearst had given her, and looked at her three new little cotton frocks. Only the blue and white were absolutely fresh. Blue, she would wear that. Men liked blue, and Mr. Hearst had said that this one was the colour of her eyes. Constance Howard had not come. Perhaps she would be along later, by motor. Marie brushed viciously at her much-despised black hair, which Alberta's climate and water had not yet robbed of its curling beauty. She heard Mrs. Hearst's voice say—

"I think he is out at the barn, Grange." And Grange answering, "Yes, I'll find him." Then he passed by her window, overhung with wild cucumber vines, through which she was peering, and she knew that he was not looking for Frank, but for herself, for he had come out through the kitchen and was walking

slowly through the kitchen garden, turning eagerly at each sound.

A great shyness now possessed her. Grange was here, waiting for her, and she could not go to him. She knew now that the longing to see him again had been at the root of all her restlessness. She went into the kitchen to put on the kettle and set about the preparation for dinner. The woodbox was almost empty—not a stick of kindling. There was no help for it. She would have to go into the yard. Her heart was beating fast as she hurried down to the wood-pile. "What a silly fool I am," said the girl to herself. "But perhaps he won't see me." And she half hoped that he would and half hoped that he would not. Of course, because he was watching for her, he saw her and came to her directly.

"Good afternoon, little Marie." He stood smiling down at her, his hands in his pockets and sun lighting his smooth, tan face and the brushed wings of his hair. "Are you ready for our ride?" He was so natural, so easily friendly, that Marie was burningly ashamed of herself. She had dreamed such dreams of this wonderful man, had thought so perpetually of him since their last meeting, that she had unconsciously come to regard him as an old and intimate friend, and now his manner said so plainly to her, "Why, here is little Marie; we have met once or twice before."

She spoke haltingly to him, her English, as always when she was intensely aware of him, becoming difficult.

"I—it would be pleasant, but I prepare the dinner with Annie. There is no wood for heating." She began to stack up the light sticks on her arm.

"Here, let me do that."

"Then you bring in an armful of the hardwood and I shall take the light wood," said Marie. She was herself again. Her perfect naturalness asserted itself. Her pleasure in all the good things in life, her unself-consciousness always came to her rescue and gave her a poise that many a girl with much more social experience would have envied. She was enjoying to the limit here the presence of Grange Houltain, the bright sun, the fresh breeze straight from the cold, clean mountains and sweet with roses, the smell of the golden wood. Grange watched her deep blue eyes crinkle when she smiled. The little humorous side twist of her mouth that made the dimples show on only one side, down in the corner near her white ball of a chin, that dimple that he had wanted to kiss the last time they were together and had cursed himself since for a fool for not so doing. And her fresh mouth! Oh, he was badly hit, all right, had been amazed at his persistent thoughts of her. His restless hands came out of his pockets and busied themselves breaking off splinters of the wood.

"But aren't we going to have our ride at all?" he protested. "I want to show you the roses and to ride into the sunset again."

"I am so sorry. It would have been very wonderful for me, as it was last time, but I am a servant in this house."

Grange frowned and shook his shoulders impatiently.

"Not a real servant, Marie. Mrs. Hearst doesn't consider you that at all."

Just as he was experiencing relief at the nearness of her after these restless weeks! That she should say that and fill him with misgivings again!

"A servant," insisted Marie. "But a servant with a very kind mistress. Oh, make no doubt of that; I know who I am, for all I receive Mrs. Hearst's guests almost as a daughter of the house."

"Marie, don't, little Marie!" cried the man, and at the tone Marie looked up and saw that as she flayed herself she hurt this beautiful and beloved creature, and tears started to her eyes.

"Oh, I am a silly," she exclaimed, impatiently. "Come, let us get this wood or Annie will come down from her nap and no vegetables on, and then——" She crinkled up her eyes with a brave smile, and a tear squeezed out of them and hung glistening, all colours, on her eyelashes until she brushed it away.

The man began furiously piling wood up on his arm. "Oh, you darling," he groaned to himself. "Frank was right," he thought, "Mrs. Hearst's kindness has only made her bitterly aware of her own people!"

They walked with their burdens to the kitchen.

"But we could ride this evening after dinner," persisted Grange, as they neared the door. "It is not dark until ten o'clock."

There was no one in the kitchen when they entered, where Marie tumbled the wood into the woodbox, thoughtfully brushing her arms before answering.

"Yes," she said, slowly. "I could ask Mrs. Hearst."

There they were again. Back at the same old place.

"Let me fix it up," said Grange, eagerly.

"Very well," said Marie quietly as she laid the fire. "There is Frank now."

"Yes, I'll go," said Grange, catching the note of dismissal in her voice, as Annie came bustling in.

Marie wearily stooped and lit the paper through the grating of the stove. She felt oddly tired of it all. The whole affair was so hopeless. She hated the atmosphere of intrigue that hung about her friendship with Grange. She remembered how she had slipped around the corner of her own little hut and, stooping, had sped along the roadside to the poplar brush when last they rode together. It was sheer relief to turn from her thoughts and busy herself helping Annie in the big farm kitchen.

"By the way," said Mrs. Hearst at dinner that night, "how is it Constance didn't come out?"

"Well," Grange spoke cautiously, as one feeling his way over dangerous ground, "she had planned to go to Banff for the week-end."

"Yes, but she said that if you came down from Edmonton before Saturday, she would come out here with you instead," said Mrs. Hearst. "Didn't she mention it to you?"

"It seemed a pity that she would miss a trip to Banff," evaded Grange. "It might be her last chance to see it."

"Why, is she going back to England?" broke in Frank. "I thought that she was staying for a month or more."

"Yes, she is," said Grange.

"Well, then——" said Mrs. Hearst.

"Yes, I know," agreed Grange. "But, oh, well, they had their plans made."

Marie, looking up, caught the man's eye. Like a great light, it flashed on her that he had deliberately planned it so that they might have their ride alone. Her heart sang. She had been right, then, all these weeks. Theirs' was not a casual acquaintanceship. He had felt that *something* between them as she had. She heard Mrs. Hearst saying. "It is a wonder that you didn't motor up to Banff with them."

"I have to be on duty to-morrow evening," explained Grange. But Marie knew why he had not gone. And to-morrow was Sunday, when she must leave Clovelly and go to her home, where Tom Canning awaited her. If she did not go, he might come to her and that must not be. Oh, that man with his slack mouth!

"Marie," said Mrs. Hearst, "shall we have coffee on the verandah? Oh, if it only would rain!" She liked to refer little household matters to this girl, whom she had grown to love. They all sauntered out. The evening was perfect, just such a night as on their last ride. Once Grange's and Marie's eyes met, telegraphing the same thought.

"What an evening," exclaimed Grange. "Where in all the world would we find beauty like this!"

The prairie had taken on the strange light of the afterglow, and the wild roses blushed deep at memories of the ardent sun. Against the white background of the mountains now faintly shrouding in blue mystery, pointed spruce trees stood black amidst the grey-green poplars on a distant hillside. Broad, black fields showed up the new and slender grain. Cattle, browsing, dotted all the hills and a great grey-brown flock of sheep moved slowly across the broad hillside, as if the hill itself were shifting. Wave upon wave, in great restful undulations, the foothills rolled to the ramparts of the Rockies. Behind, on both sides, the flat prairie stretched like a limitless sea to the horizon.

"A perfect night for a ride," ejaculated Grange.

"Oh, my dear boy, such energy!" exclaimed Mrs. Hearst. "The chinook took it out of me to-day. I am not going to move from this chair until bedtime, and George won't go because he has been gardening and prefers to ride in the morning, anyway. Perhaps Marie and Frank will go?" She looked towards the

girl who had been sitting almost breathless. It meant so much to her; this one ride.

"Ride, Mrs. Hearst? I should like that very much." Had she spoken naturally, she wondered.

"Then, Marie, will you take Lady and go?" asked Frank. "She needs the exercise, and I have been all over the place to-day. I am completely fagged."

Slowly Grange and Marie left the little group on the verandah. It would never do to show eager haste. What cared they if they never got away. You are sure you won't come? It is such a glorious evening. No? Too bad.

They cantered lightly down the long lane, wrapped about in a great pearl of a world. The heavy sweetness of a balm of Gilead, and the wolf willows filled the air. Some of the Saskatoon berries were beginning to colour like pale amethysts. Pert gophers got down off their little haunches and scurried away to their holes for the night, while a great rabbit hopped ahead of them on the road, then dashed off to the side. Once more Marie, her knees pressed tight to her horse, rode so lightly, all exultation, as if she rode on the top of the world. She stole a sidelong glance at Grange and their eyes met again in one of their long looks, but this time Marie felt no fear. They exchanged an intimate little smile and were like guilty, happy conspirators.

They rode along the road that goes straight through the hills, the bald prairie a thing forgotten, and were in the brush country. The Elbow River hurried along

still swollen from the melting snows on the mountains. Birds stirred in the poplars and the underbrush, called sleepily, then rested, brooding yearningly over their young. An eagle soared high, swooped down the long tunnel of the evening, soared again. Lights twinkled from farms tucked away in the gracious valleys among the hills. The riders paused at a little culvert. The tiny stream beneath could be barely seen in the wan dusk. The moon's glow shone up over the lower hills, and the moon came riding up, swiftly mounting the sky and trailing the glory of worlds. A cow-bell tinkled far away. The riders were silent. The horses pawed the ground and shook their heads, sidling near and from each other. Marie shivered.

"You're cold," cried Grange. "Shall we get down and walk? The nights are always chilly; or are you too tired?"

"Oh, I am not tired," answered Marie. "But we must start walking back. It is nearly dark now." Both the man's arms were upheld and she allowed herself to be lifted down. Grange released her slowly, pressing her shoulders with his strong, brown hands. The easy chatter of their last evening seemed impossible. They walked on, speaking without enthusiasm of the good shooting in that part of the country in the fall, the merits of their horses, the drought. Grange asked Marie about her father, was he more settled, did the dry weather worry him? She was touched at his remembering her own troubles. But every topic hit

upon soon lagged. The witchery of the night had seeped into them both. They were feeling too intensely to admit of much thinking. At length Marie said—

"We must ride now. It is getting late. Mrs. Hearst will wonder why we stayed so long."

Grange had been guiding her along the half-dark road. His hand tightened on hers. Why be a fool and miss everything.

"Marie," he said, huskily. They stood a second facing each other. Marie read the love and desire in his eyes. Her own eyes were heavy-lidded, her lovely lips, slightly parted, asked for his kisses, her arms ached with longing.

"Oh, little Marie, little Marie," murmured the man and caught her to him, kissing her eyes, her throat, her mouth. Her soft yielding body pressed against his, then the girl wrenched herself free.

"Please, no, no," she half sobbed, protestingly. "Let us not lose our friendship in this. I, who have so few friends." She threw herself up on her horse swiftly and raced away. Grange caught up to her and for some distance they rode silently. Finally, Marie allowed her horse to slacken and they both settled down to a comfortable trot.

"Marie," said the man, softly. "How can I explain myself; how can I tell you how much ashamed I am?"

"Let us not talk of it," said the girl. "It was not entirely your fault. Is it ever one person's fault?"

But we were both very foolish. Let us try and forget all about it."

"I shall never forget it, little Marie." Grange's voice trembled slightly and Marie laughed softly. Then they rode on in the night. But Grange Houl-tain's blood was on fire. The taste of her kisses had hungered him for more. The soft pressure of her body before her quick withdrawing had made his desire the hotter. Once more, as on the last evening that they had been together, he thought, "I can take this lovely creature for my own." And once more he knew that he would not. She was so fresh and sweet, so wholesome and sensible. He did not know that it was love, pure love, that he felt for her.

And Marie—Marie was experiencing joy that was pain, sorrow that was exquisite happiness. The still moonlight night filled her with yearning and homesickness, a gentle melancholy. She saw the cows in her green meadow, the river ambling by, the brilliant poppies. She broke into a little song of her own country. Her voice had no range, she almost chanted with a soft throatiness. Grange was charmed. Her music made him gay. She taught him a little verse. His own voice was rich and full. They rode in the white night chanting their little French song, loving and beloved, one with the moon and the stars, and the still, sleeping night.

CHAPTER VI.

THE next day was Sunday. Marie was busy with her work in the morning. Frank and Grange rode over to a neighbour's. Clovelly was very quiet and filled Marie with a great peace, after a night of tumultuous thoughts. She had not seen Grange since their ride; for, on arriving at Clovelly, she had gone straight to bed, leaving the Hearsts and their guest to play bridge, and she had breakfasted early. Where was she drifting with this man? Gabriel's sneer, "Well, who are you?" hammered at her. Once again she vowed never to ride with him. It upset her too much. She inherited from her mother only her good looks and strong passion, but these were guarded by a sane dignity and fierce pride. She loved Grange Houltain and feared him. She was as aware, in this new and democratic country, of class distinctions, as she had been in the old land. They existed in Canada—but with this difference, money could batter the walls down, so that for her they were impregnable. She could dream of Grange, she had some rare memories, but she never forgot Constance Howard, the man's mother, his place in the world.

When Frank and Grange came back, Grange pro-

posed tennis for the afternoon. Mrs. Hearst was enthusiastic.

"And to-night we shall take the motor and go to church," threw in Mr. Hearst.

Marie thought of the joy of driving swiftly over the prairies with Grange. Their eyes met. The girl's heart beat fast.

"How about it, Marie?" asked Frank, looking quizzically at her across the table.

She raised her glowing face to express approval, then, catching his glance, remembered. Tom Canning! Joy went out of the day.

"I am so sorry," she murmured. "I have promised to go home, if Annie can spare me."

"Oh, my dear, that is disappointing. Poor Grange here, and nobody to look after him. First Constance disappoints us, and now Marie goes back on us."

A shade of annoyance passed over the three young faces. Mrs. Hearst, kind soul, felt that she had blundered in some mysterious way, and added—

"Of course, dear, just as you like. Couldn't you stay here for the afternoon, and we shall drive you over early on our way to church? You could stay the night then and I shall go over and fetch you in the morning."

And so it was arranged. Perhaps Tom Canning would not stay for the frugal meal he would know was sure to be served at the Fourchette place. What a relief to put off for a few hours meeting him. What a joy to be with Grange.

Not once, through the long day, though opportunity occurred, did Marie and Grange seek each other out, snatch a few moments alone. They played tennis with the others, laughed and chatted over tea. The two boys did absurd stunts on the lawn. Marie and Grange, longing to be alone together, felt a righteous glow at being so jolly with the others. The heat was oppressive. Clouds began to roll up from the west. "I believe that we are going to have a storm," exclaimed Mrs. Hearst. "What do you think, George?"

"It seems like it," answered her husband. "The barometer has been falling steadily, but that may mean anything in this country."

"I feel as limp as a rag. Look at Marie in that little green dress. She never wilts in the heat. She is as fresh as a——"

"As a cabbage lettuce," laughed Marie.

"Exactly," cried Frank. "As cool and good to look at as a head of lettuce. Always put that dress on when the heat is stifling, Marie. It refreshes me to look at you."

"But I might not feel like lettuce the next hot day," laughed the girl. "I was in a lettuce mood to-day, and so I put on the green dress and have been able to keep cool."

"A lettuce mood," smiled George Hearst. "That sounds promising, Marie. Have you other similar moods?" Oh, they spoilt the girl, these older people, drawing her out, appreciating her quaint humour.

"Oh, yes," said Marie. "I have other vegetable moods. In my lettuce mood I use that nice toilet water Mrs. Hearst gave me, so sweet and fresh it is, and in a pretty frosted bottle, and I talk, what you call it, Mrs. Hearst? So nice and silly and false? Yes!—platitudes. When I am in a celery mood, I am cool, self-possessed, saying rather clever, sharp things, just a little too loudly for fear my audience won't hear me. Sometimes, especially at house-cleaning times, I am like a potato, and a very grubby one at that, with many eyes that see nothing but dirt and more dirt that has to be cleaned up. There are days when I am efficient and silent, wrapped up tight in myself, and wondering why I, and all belonging to me, have not achieved something better than cabbagedom. After a potato mood, with all the grubbing over, clean and tidy once more, I am so good, so sweet, so wholesome, so ugly, that I outrival every parsnip. What is there about parsnips that one should like them and doesn't? I am sure that they are conceited and self-satisfied. A turnip isn't. It is of the earth, earthy, and is willing to admit it. We like it for its humility and robustness and hint of daring colour in it when it is dished up on our plates. But parsnips——" She shrugged and held up her hands helplessly. "Parsnips are so, what is it, Mrs. Hearst?"

"Inocuous," said Mrs. Hearst. She was always there with the correct word for Marie. It was a family

joke. No wonder the girl already boasted of a vocabulary above the average Canadian's.

After an early tea, the Hearsts drove Marie over to her home. As she ran up the lane to the hut, heavy banks of clouds had already gathered to the south and west. She opened the door.

"Well," shrilled her mother. "You did come. At such a time. You told Tom Canning you would be here."

"Did he say so?" asked Marie, wearily. Oh, the poverty of the place, the gloom and fretfulness.

"No, he didn't say so," mimicked her mother. "But his mother said so, and here he is waiting since two o'clock."

"Has he gone?" asked the girl hopefully.

"No, and lucky you are that he hasn't. He would have gone only I got him to ride with Gabriel for the cows. Now you behave yourself when he comes, you hear? None of your fine lady airs. They are going to take Gabriel to work on their place next winter, maybe, when Tom goes to town. Mrs. Canning is my good friend," she finished, proudly.

"Where is father?"

"Where would he be? In the cowshed," exclaimed the woman, crossly. "By Our Lady, he gets to look like a cow with his big eyes, so sad. He has no go, he is like a squirrel in a cage, hurry, hurry and gets nowhere. Now such a man as Mr. Canning is!"

"Let us go and look at the garden," said Marie. She hated to hear her mother when she railed about her father, now more than ever since she herself loved, and wished to idealize marriage. She picked up little Jean, smothering him with caresses. The other children were down playing at the haystack. The clouds already were covering the sky, filling the west, blotting out the sun. The world was in a dim yellow light, as if seen through amber glasses.

"Ah," breathed Madame Fourchette gratefully, as they walked down the path to the garden. "We shall have a storm, sure enough, a great storm. See the strange light, like the end of the world."

A wind whipped up and beat their clothes about them, making the heavy woman, the girl with the child in her arms, dark figures at one with the landscape, like trees or boulders. They stooped over the slender, pale green rows of the garden.

"Everything looks splendid," cried Marie, approvingly. "How ever did you keep it all so fresh."

"Ah, it has been a job," cried her mother. "All of us dragging water from that well. But it is our living for next winter. Merciful Heaven, without it we would face starvation."

"But we have the wheat."

"Not so much, not so much." Her mother shook her head. "Not like the pictures the agents in Belgium sent us. It grows sparse, like the hair on a baby's head, and will dry up sure enough without rain. I

tell you, we were tricked, being sent here; tricked by Gabriel Fourchette and the agent—yes, and the Curé. I knew it was a plot. All their talk of land for nothing and no money needed once we got settled. Fifty dollars did it cost to find our land. Not once did they tell us we must spend over a hundred dollars to dig a well, nor did they say a word of ploughs, or seeders, or waggons, a pair of horses, seed to plant, and food, so dear, for the winter; harness we must get and lumber, such a price, for our hut and our bunks and our cowshed. Work, they say, work when you do not labour on your own land, work at such high wages, five dollars a day, but not a word do they say of their long, cold, white winters when there is no work, and coal is dear, and wood is dearer."

Marie laughed. "Come, mother, you are cross and blue to-day. You know that you like Canada. Next year we shall build a nice wooden house with two or three rooms and I will make curtains. Why be unhappy with this rain coming? It is only rain we need to make us rich."

They straightened from their stooping position over the young plants.

"Already we have radishes and lettuce," said Madame Fourchette, proudly. "Look at those clouds, how odd they are."

They gazed at the heavy clouds through which ran great streaks.

"I wonder what causes that?" puzzled Marie. "We'd better run to the house before the storm breaks."

A few big drops fell, the air chilled. There was a roar in the distance as of mighty waters advancing in a flood, and the hail was upon them, thudding, cracking down, great lumps as big as crows' eggs; all shapes, round, jagged, star-shaped. Madame Fourchette crouched low over Jean to protect him. The child wept with fright. No use to drive their way against the pelting ice to cover. Marie, with arms outstretched over her mother's broad back, took the great force of the storm. At length it abated slightly and, snatching the child in her arms, she half-dragged, half-pushed her whimpering mother over the white ground towards the hut. Tom Canning came running to meet them, relieving Marie of the child. They burst in through the door, their arms and shoulders bruised and red. The other children stood huddled, in a terrified group about the cold stove.

"Stand back," cried Canning. "Don't go near the stove. There will be lightning with this."

In terror they scuttled to another dark corner of the room. The hail rattled on the windows, cracking some, breaking in others. They all stood with white faces and bated breath in the dark little room while the storm raged on. At length Marie said sharply—

"Where's father?"

"I don't know," said Gabriel. "I think he is down in the shed."

The girl, fear for him gripping her, pulled open the door.

"Don't be crazy, come back," cried Tom.

But Marie was gone.

The storm was letting up. Cold, drizzling rain began to fall. The girl stood on the door slab of the shed, looking into the gloom. The cows moved restlessly, clinking their stall chains. The warm, pungent smell of milk and steaming manure assailed her nostrils.

"Father," she called, but her voice did not lift above the storm. She folded her arms, shivering in the damp cold. She knew that her father was within. Clearing her throat she called again.

"Father!"

There was no answer. She went inside, stepping softly, hesitatingly, over the earth floor. Henri Fourchette sat in the corner on a broken box. His heavy lower lip hung pendulous. He seemed to be unaware of the girl's presence.

"Oh, father!" cried the girl in distress, touching him gently on the shoulder. He looked at her and grinned broadly.

"Father, it is awful—this hail. Don't stay out here alone. It is so cold."

He shook her hand off his shoulder and, drawing in a deep, uneven breath, began to laugh wildly. He rocked to and fro in his wild mirth. The weak box beneath him collapsed and he went sprawling on the floor. Scrambling up in a rage, he snatched the pieces

of wood, kicking at them, breaking them to bits in his thick gnarled hands, throwing them about. His eyes lit on Marie and as she fled in terror, bits of flying wood came hurtling through the air after her.

The rain was gentler now—a soft, kind thing, remorsefully weeping and begging forgiveness for its mad temper. Marie ran through it to the hut. The others cried—

“Did you find him? Where is he?”

“He is all right, he is in the shed,” said the girl, shortly.

Gabriel was lighting the fire in the stove, and soon it began to crackle cheerily, blinking through the grating. Madame Fourchette was busy stuffing some old clothes in the broken windows. Warmth, the smell of coffee, filled the room.

“Hard luck, indeed,” said Tom Canning, commiseratingly. “You people were right in the centre of the hail.”

“I wonder if the Hearsts got it?” asked Madame Fourchette, hopefully. She hated the family. If they shared the great misfortune, it would be a salve to the sore wound. Canning looked through the window.

“I don’t think so, Mrs. Fourchette,” he said. “It didn’t get that far. Hail is a freakish thing. One never knows where it will come. It is raining over at Clovelly now. I think we have missed it, too.”

Marie's heart was torn for her family. So filled with tenderness for them that she had room for no one else that night. She remembered Tom Canning running to her and rescuing the child from the cruel hail. His tone of genuine sympathy as he spoke of their misfortune. She busied herself getting supper and Tom helped her, as he was used to helping his mother. This looked strange to Marie, and she thought it very, very kind. She listened intently for her father's footsteps, wanting him to be in and share the warmth and food, but she was afraid to go to him again.

They sat down to supper. Madame Fourchette, biting into a crisp, round, pink little radish, suddenly cried, "My garden, my garden, gone, we shall starve!" and licked the salt tears from her lips.

"Don't you worry, Mrs. Fourchette, we won't see you stuck," Tom Canning assured her.

Marie threw him a grateful look. He glowed with satisfaction. He was making headway.

Later, they all stood out of doors. The evening was still damp and chilly, but the whiteness had gone from the ground. Marie, with relief, saw her father taking the horses over to water them.

The slim, fair beauty of the young wheat lay ravaged and ruined on the black earth.

* * * * *

When Henri Fourchette saw the ruin of his crops he resolved to hire out as a labourer on one of the

other farms. Madame Fourchette was left to attend the stock and do what work there was about the place with the help of the small children. She thoroughly enjoyed her freedom. Twice had the man to seek a new position. His temper, always hasty, now became violent. He went about muttering to himself. The least incident was apt to throw him into a mad rage. The sturdy men from Scotland and Ontario, among whom he worked, disliked and half feared him. They suspected all foreigners of carrying knives and described him as an ugly customer. More than ever he complained that everything went against him. His two dismissals rankled in his soul, for he knew that he was a hard worker and he developed a strong hatred of his former employers. Had it not been for the fact that farm labour, as always in Alberta in summer, was scarce, he would have found himself without work.

The crops over most of the country looked better since the heavy storm. The weather had stayed cool and dull for several days with fitful rains, allowing the moisture a chance to sink into the earth. Marie felt happier taking on some of the mad optimism of the West. It was a relief to know that her mother and the small children were not alone with her father. She could not blot out the memory of his eyes that awful afternoon. She did not see Grange again. He had telephoned Mrs. Hearst once or twice that he was very busy. Mr. Hearst spoke of Austria, mistrusted Germany. Mrs. Hearst, in her soft, haunting voice,

that one was ever hearing when one thought of her, said—

"Oh, but how ridiculous. You don't think it could be war?" And Mr. Hearst had thundered, "And why not, Laura—haven't we talked of war for forty years?"

Patiently, at their meals, he explained the situation to Marie. With unbelievable swiftness, Europe spun to her destruction. Events crowded on one another hourly. George Hearst, impatient for news, was constantly telephoning into the *Herald* office at Calgary.

At last he turned from the 'phone, slumped in his chair.

"What is it, George?" cried Laura Hearst sharply.

"The Germans are in Belgium." His voice was quiet, awed. "It has come, my dear, the war with Germany has come."

Marie gently put down the little carved ivory figure that she was dusting. It had nearly broken in her hand. Mrs. Hearst went over to her husband. Slowly he rose, straightened himself, and stooping, kissed her.

"Our best days are over, dear," he said. "Happiness will never come to thinking people in our generation again."

They left the room. Marie, through the window, saw them cross the verandah and walk slowly down into the garden. The girl stood motionless by the table. She felt suddenly cold in the big, cheerful, sunny room, although the heat danced across the prairies, and it seemed as if the very earth was shivering with fear.

She noted that the swallows were building a new nest under the eaves of the verandah. That would make four; four lumpy clay houses. A meadow lark sang. She crossed the room and neatly tucked in the cord of a cushion that was fraying. Then she sat down on the sofa and stared vacantly in front of her. She saw the blue sky and golden sunlight, the scarlet poppies and green grass, the spotted cows, against the river, sky and grass. The Germans were in Belgium. She shuddered. It would go hard with her people.

Slowly the girl arose and went about her work again. She helped Annie with the luncheon and during the meal the talk was of nothing but the inevitable war. Marie took no part in it and her silence was unnoticed. The Hearsts, English people and army people, talked not glibly of a short war, of financiers who would not allow war. They knew too much of the forces involved. Saturday night Marie went to Mrs. Hearst.

"May I borrow a horse, Mrs. Hearst? I must go home to-morrow if you do not need me."

Mrs. Hearst looked up quickly at the girl.

"Oh, my dear, of course, it is *Belgium*. How strange we never thought." She took the girl in her arms, and for the first time Marie burst into tears, long, bitter, choking sobs. She became calmer, dabbing her eyes with her little wet ball of a handkerchief.

"Wrapped up in our own worries, little Marie, we have been very thoughtless," said Mrs. Hearst, ser-

iously. "Your suffering has been greater than ours. It is a great, an amazing thing, this love of country, taking precedence when need be over all other loves."

"It will be hard on father," said Marie. "Oh, I am so worried about him, too. He is so strange, Mrs. Hearst, ever since he left Belgium. Of course, worse since he lost his crop. Now he will hear the other farm servants talk of the war, the atrocities. I am afraid for him."

As Marie rode along the road that day in August, she thought that never before had she seen the prairies so lovely. They were so broad and limitless, rolling up into the distant foothills in front of her, shimmering away over an incredible distance to the horizon behind her. The gay *Gardalias*, the slender *Bluebells*, all the bright flowers of the prairie were blooming in profusion beneath the high arch of the Alberta sky. A house, three elevators, a straw stack, rubbed by cattle into a giant mushroom, were visible thirty miles or more away in the rare, clear air. The tall and pointed spires of dark spruce in the distance marked the course of the river. The girl thought of her own little Belgium soaked in blood again. How many years since this peaceful level land over which she rode had lapped up blood? A few Indian battles, that was all. It was new and pure and clean and safe. She loved it. Loved its sun, its brightness, its sweeping space. She smiled as she thought of an English guest of Mrs. Hearst's who had complained that the trouble with

Canada was that there was so much of it out-of-doors. She loved it for just that. Once again came the thought that the people could never wholly possess this country. Its vast area, its harsh rigours precluded that. Never would it be the mat on which men fought their battles of greed and false ambitions.

This western land was as clean and sweet and wholesome as the clear, fresh breeze that blew on her from the snow-capped mountains on which the morning sun was gleaming—but Belgium, her poor Belgium. Tears filled her eyes.

Her mother had seen her coming and stood waiting for her by the two weak posts and bit of wire that served for a gate. She was nervously rolling her arms into her grey apron and unrolling them again.

"Oh, it is good that you have come!" she cried with relief, as Marie dismounted. She spoke swiftly, in her native tongue. "Gabriel will soon be here. He has promised."

"What is worrying you?" asked Marie, gently.

Always she approached her mother with such good resolutions. She would love her; she would be gentle and kind to her. Then they would quarrel. In a few minutes her mother would be pouring a torrent of complaints and abuses at her. But to-day nothing would shake Marie's resolve. Her mother was a Belgian. She would have given the last drop of her heart's blood for one of her own people.

"Oh, your father!" cried the woman, despairingly. "He is in a bad state."

"I was afraid for him," said Marie, anxiously. "This awful war. Poor father."

"What is this awful war to us?" cried the older woman, gesticulating impatiently. "The war is not here. My God, to hear the both of you, you would think it was the first war ever on earth. Why is he not glad that we are out of it? And wheat next year may be good, and then what a price we shall get."

"But Belgium, mother," cried the girl, indignantly, tears choking her voice. "Belgium is suffering. The Germans are in Belgium."

"Tch, what difference?" cried Madame Fourchette. "Germans or French. Ach, you Walloons are all alike—fuss, fuss, fuss. I have tried to tell your father," she added after a moment.

"Oh, of course, you have!" cried the girl in exasperation. "No wonder poor father is in a bad state. Where is he?"

"No need to go to him," said the woman. "He hides himself. He lost his job again and came home yesterday afternoon. What I have been through, what a night!" She raised her stiff-fingered, heavy, brown hand and brushed back her straggling hair. Fear was in her eyes.

"Don't worry. Gabriel will soon be home," consoled Marie.

"And Tom Canning—" threw in Madame Fourchette. She sensed Marie's softened mood and chose to ignore the girl's quick frown of annoyance. "It is all right for you, Marie," she whined. "You live half your days in a fine house. You ride in an automobile. You eat dainties. But what have I had in my life since I was married? Work, and the miseries of bearing children, and coarse food, none too plentiful at that. But now I have a friend, and you want me to lose her. You make her angry with your fine airs towards her son. Some day you may be glad of a friend, just one friend. You are young now, and so sure that life will be happy. Oh, I know. I lived in a Senator's house once, and *he* had a son, too. The wonderful Hearsts, that you worship, will be good to you just as long as you are not a worry or a nuisance to them. I did not marry the senator's son, you know. I was put out of their house and married your father, and bore children who work too hard and cannot eat enough. You will do well to help your family and you can never do that through Frank Hearst. You are aiming too high. It is Tom Canning whom you must look to."

"Mother, Frank Hearst is nothing to me."

"Oh, I know young men," answered her mother with a nasty grin, as her eyes swept over her daughter's loveliness. "You are the image of me when I was young."

Marie dashed up to the house. How could she be patient and gentle with this woman who was her mother. She divided among the small children the home-made candy which Mrs. Hearst had sent, showed them the cookies and, most wonderful of all, the mocha balls she had made for them. She washed them and tidied the house, and for once Madame Fourchette showed none of her usual impatience at that, for she thought that it was all being done for Tom Canning's approval.

Gabriel and Tom Canning came after the mid-day meal. Gabriel was more cock-sure, more intolerant of others' opinions than ever, more impatient with the country which at first he had loved, but largely through Tom Canning's constant complaints had come to dislike. To only one person did he pay respect, to only one person's opinion did he listen, and that was this poor specimen of manhood, whose friendship because of his greater age, small prosperity and native blood, flattered the young foreigner.

Marie, despite her mother's admonishings, paid little heed to Tom. In the afternoon, she busied herself cleaning out the chicken house. On every hand the place was showing signs of neglect. This annoyed Marie. That her father should have worked them all so hard, should have toiled so unceasingly himself, and then have all that great effort wasted filled her with angry indignation, yet she knew that

her mother had more work to do than she could accomplish.

The afternoon was well advanced before Marie's task was finished. She went to the hut and cleaned herself, then sauntered to the door. She must nerve herself to look for her father—something must be done about him. He had had no dinner. She could not leave her mother alone with him, until she herself had seen him. Obviously, her mother was afraid; that look of terror in her eyes!

Tom Canning and Gabriel were throwing horse-shoes in the yard. They did not see her. They whispered and giggled, or made remarks with double meanings. She could not stay there. Then she saw her father come stumbling and shuffling to the hut. Her mother, standing near, saw him at the same instant. She spoke sharply to the children, who scurried through the door and out of sight. Even the smallest, rolling away, round-eyed and round-mouthed. Marie turned to protest at such nonsense, but there was real fear in her mother's face.

Henri Fourchette's head was hanging and he did not see his daughter. His hair straggled in his eyes, he had not shaved for many days. The button of his cuff had fallen off and the sleeve hung in dirty rags on his gaunt wrist.

"Well, father," said Marie, trying to speak naturally, "you're just in time for your supper. The coffee is ready."

Henri Fourchette appeared not to notice her. He was mumbling as if talking to someone, all the while plucking at his heavy lip. The girl's mother had retreated behind the little stove and now stood shaking her head helplessly, and making despairing gestures.

"Father!" cried the girl sharply. She must confirm this dread. She must see his eyes. The man raised his head, shaking back his lank hair. His wild eyes did not recognize her and he grinned like a demon. Marie shrank back into the shadow of the room. Then, to her amazement, the man's face settled into calm and he said quietly—

"The wheat—you see—the wheat is no good. It is all ruined."

"Yes, father," said the girl with relief. "It is too bad that the hail came."

"Oh, but it was not the hail," he asserted. "It was so poor and light before the hail." He came nearer. "The wheat will not grow here. It needs fertilizer." His eyes became wild again. He slapped the girl roughly on the back, jarring her whole body. "Blood and bone, that is what we need—blood, blood, blood!" His voice rose with each reiteration. He stooped over the earth, raising his hands each time, as if pouring the blood into the soil, and all the while he looked at the terrified girl over his shoulder, his face set in that wild demon grin. Then, with hands upraised, fingers wide stretched, he laughed shrilly and, turning, ran back to the cowshed.

Aghast, Marie turned to her mother.

"You see," said Madame Fourchette. Marie's very lips were white. Her mother shrugged and tapped her forehead, then lifted the boiling coffee from the stove, but her hands trembled so that the spilled liquid sizzled on the hot iron, and the lifter rattled as she tried to place the lid over the hole.

Tom Canning and Gabriel sauntered in. The children crept back to the room.

"Have you seen father?" asked Marie softly, of her brother.

"No," said the boy tersely. "I beat it when I saw him coming. Why, what's the matter?"

"I'll tell you after," whispered Marie, glancing significantly at Tom.

"I am going back with him," said Gabriel.

Madame Fourchette broke into a torrent of French, rolling her eyes and shrugging, waving her hands. Gabriel nodded understandingly and explained to his friend that he had to stay with his mother all night.

Gloomily they sat down to the meagre meal. A breeze rushed in at the door, flickering the dim lamp and banging the door shut. Everyone jumped, then settled, breathing more easily again. Marie, after their supper, petted the little ones and tucked them into their bunks. At the touch of their soft little hands, tears started to her eyes and she caught them to her, as if to shield them all. Tom and Gabriel spoke in whispers, sitting on the bench behind the

stove. Everyone walked on tip toes. Marie prayed in her heart that the hated Tom Canning would not go. Her mother cleared the dishes away and left the loaf and a bottle of beer on the table for her husband. She placed the rough, home-made chair ready for him. Even the boys' whispering ceased at length. Nothing was heard in the hut but the tinkle of the cooling stove, the flick of a moth on the lamp glass, the mother, in her dark corner, sibilantly telling her beads.

At length, when the waiting became well nigh unendurable, they heard the scraping of the dreaded footsteps. The listeners straightened. The door opened slowly and Henri Fourchette came quietly in and seated himself at the table. Apparently unaware of the other occupants of the room, the demented man cut himself a thick slice of bread and cheese. Then he took up the bottle of beer. He looked at the tin cap, frowned and shook his head disapprovingly, but finally opened the bottle. He ate and drank hungrily, noisily, for he had had a long fast. His eyes were fixed vacantly on the centre of the rough table top. At length, in a slack, resistless voice, he spoke—

"I met a German down by the pump." He smiled reminiscently, and the stubble on his chin gleamed in the lamp light.

He looked about as if waiting for some remark.

"Yes, father," said Marie. She reached out and clung tightly to the side of the bench on which the two boys were sitting. Tom Canning's hand closed

over hers. She hated it, but felt as if she were in a dream and powerless to move.

"He wanted my wheat," laughed the Belgian, contemptuously, and then broke into a silly giggle. He took another bite of the thick slice and spoke again—

"Do you know what I did?" He looked around at his audience again and repeated, "Do you know what I did?"

"What did you do, father?" Once more came in Marie's small voice.

Suddenly, the wild fiend in him was again let loose. He rose and hurled the long, gleaming bread knife with tremendous force into the top of the table. The clatter of beads was heard on the floor. Tom Canning's face went white. He had understood not a word; had only seen the man's crazy face, the throwing of the knife. The gaze of each one became riveted on the still-quivering knife. No one dared move.

The man sat down again. "I killed him." He nodded complacently. "And I poured his blood on the garden. Blood and bone, blood and bone!"

He turned his thoughts again to his supper and quaffed the last glass of beer at a single draught. The moth hit the glass again. The man looked up. Hands on the table, he half rose and stood peering over the lamp into the darkness. Then his lips parted in a snarl.

"You're there again, eh?" he shouted. Like a flash he wrenched out the knife. With a wild cry, Gabriel leaped to the door and pulled it open, fleeing for his life. The madman raced after him, his weapon flashing in the light of the doorway. Tom and Marie ran, following. The children woke and cried, and Madame Fourchette patted them mechanically, rocking her heavy body back and forth on their bunk.

"Oh, Mon Dieu, Mon Dieu!" she moaned.

The crazed man soon gave up his chase of Gabriel and, hearing the hurrying footsteps of the others, turned on them. They flew back to the house and tumbled in, barring the door. The man pounded wildly at it, then, mumbling, he shuffled away. Tom and Marie, in a frenzy of haste, barred the windows, and Madame Fourchette crouched at the door listening for Gabriel's footsteps. At last they were heard. Stealthily they opened the door and he slipped in.

"Where is he?" they whispered.

"I hid behind the trough," panted the boy. "He has gone down towards the road now."

All night they dozed fitfully, not attempting to go to bed. Towards twelve o'clock they heard the man come back and prowl around the house. He tried the little windows and the door, then broke into wild shouting and wilder laughter. He would become quiet again, pleading pitifully with his wife to let him in. The tears would course down her cheeks. She would beg her children to let her open the door. Then

would come the wild laughter, and she would crouch back, shuddering, her eyes rolling with fright.

Through the long night this lasted. It was nearly seven o'clock before the poor creature went away. He had been quiet for some time and they had all dozed. When they awoke he had gone.

They held a conference. Tom advised them all to stay indoors until it was nearly time for the postman to drive past, then Gabriel would effect his escape if possible, and lying in wait for him drive to the next farm, where he could tell of their plight. They had a poor breakfast. There was no water in, and they could not make coffee. However, they made some toast and, as a great luxury, Madame Fourchette made an omelette. The young people laughed and giggled, a reaction after the harrowing night, glad of the light and the hope of a new day. And each laugh was a stab in Madame Fourchette's heart, who was old enough to mistrust new days.

They concluded that Henri Fourchette must be sleeping in the cowshed. The cows had been turned loose, and mooed plaintively, begging relief from their heavy udders. Gabriel seized the opportunity and, slipping out of the house, ran crouching to the road. The anxious watchers saw him stop the mailman and clamber into the rig. After that their hearts were lighter. Tom helped Marie tidy the hut. Although he looked greedily at her, he had sense enough not to

bother her, and spent the time talking garrulously of every insane murderer of whom he had ever heard.

At length the watcher at the door said that Fourchette was coming again. Silence reigned once more in the little room. The man shook the handle of the door, pounded violently on the covered windows. He ran about hither and thither shouting and laughing. Would help never come! There was a scraping and shuffling, and then a peculiar thumping overhead. "He's on the roof," whispered Tom in amazement.

"Oh, God, what next," groaned the women.

Then came the sound of hoofs, as two horses trotted up the lane; the voice of Grange, calling—

"Fourchette—Fourchette—descendez!"

Oh, blessed relief! Oh, deepest, bitterest shame!

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Gabriel Fourchette had told the mailman of his father's insanity, the postman had hurried up his wiry little mustang and, arriving at the next house, had wasted no time in telephoning over to the Mounted Police Barracks. Grange and one of the men had been immediately despatched to get Fourchette and take him back to the barracks, from whence he would go to the provincial asylum at Ponoka. It was an anxious ride for Grange. He knew that Marie was at her home and he dreaded meeting her in the face of this new circumstance. The memory of their rides was still warm about his heart. All day Sunday he had wanted to have her to himself, to catch her to him again, and kiss her cool, sweet lips, her soft throat, the heavy, white lids of her eyes. He had let his fancy run away with him. After all, she was clever, she was beautiful, she was a friend of Mr. and Mrs. Hearst. She had more intelligence and was more widely read than most of the girls he knew. Supposing—of course he wouldn't—but just supposing that he married a girl in Marie's position. Well, thank goodness, he had a little money, one could move far away from her people.

But to-day's events caught him up on his thoughts. *Can one get away from one's parents?* He feared not. Marie would always be the daughter of Henri Fourchette. The crowding and poverty of the hut were worse than the poor man had imagined. He had only seen Marie, prettily dressed, in charming surroundings. He had visualized her home, unconsciously, as poor, but reflecting the girl's daintiness and good taste. After he had captured his man, the family had tumbled out of the house, so many children in ugly clothes. Gabriel had swaggered about, filled with importance over the part he had played, telling over and over of how he had been chased by his father the night before, of the dangers he risked to get to the mailman. He was flippant and impertinent to the two Mounted Policemen, as only a child can be who is trying to impress his superiors.

Madame Fourchette had waddled over to Grange, her apron where it covered her round ball of a stomach, grimy, her feet shuffling and flapping in an old pair of Mr. Hearst's house slippers. She had talked, and shrilled, and gesticulated, begging him to see what he could do for her, for how would they live now? Would he speak to the Government?

Grange was heartily disgusted. He was finished with the Fourchettes, all of them, every one! And then he looked up and saw Marie standing in the dim recess of the doorway. She did not dodge back when she realized that she was seen, but her head drooped.

Every line of her body bespoke shame, sorrow and humiliation. Grange's heart leaped high with pity. For the time, Marie's family had blotted out her own image in the man's mind, but now he saw her again. He had even forgotten that she, with her refinement, must be tortured by all this.

He nodded to the other man to go on with their now quiet prisoner. Leaving the astonished mother he strode over to the hut and went in.

"Marie," he called softly, blinded for the moment by the change from the bright sunlight to the dark little hut.

She came to him, from where she was standing near the window.

"Marie, my dear!"

Oh, his kind voice! He opened his arms and took the over-wrought girl close to him, kissing her gently. Tears trickled slowly from under her white lids, and she clung to the man desperately. Then, quickly, he put her aside.

"Your mother, sweetheart," he whispered, and strode swiftly to the door.

Marie threw herself upon her bunk and broke into a torrent of weeping.

"What did that man want in the house?" asked Madame Fourchette sharply, but Marie could not answer.

"Well, if he was spying around to see if we really

are as poor as I said, this should show him," she said. "Where did Tom go?"

But Tom had sharper eyes than Madame Fourchette. Marie, getting up slowly from the bed, wiping her eyes, saw him leading his little mare up from the stable. He gave a vicious pull at her mouth, which made the poor beast toss and tremble. Marie, not unmindful of the great support he had been to them through the long harrowing night, went out to thank him and bid him good-bye.

"You have been very good, Tom," she said gratefully.

"Who is that stuck-up fellow?" he asked, ignoring her remarks.

"Which one?" asked Marie.

"You know the one I mean, well enough," answered the man sullenly, as he swung up on his horse. "I'm not blind, you know."

"I didn't suppose that you were," said Marie coldly.

"Well, anyway, it looks mighty suspicious, his dashing into the house when you were in there alone."

"Yes, didn't it," said the girl. "Are you sure that he knew I was in there at all?"

"Well," grumbled her ill-natured suitor, "that is just what I want to know."

Marie smiled sweetly. "Who did you say he was?" she queried.

"I don't know, I was asking you," Tom answered, appeased. "Well, so long. I'll be over Sunday. See you then." He cantered down the road.

"Ugh," shivered Marie.

The Fourchette's plight was not as desperate as it seemed. George Hearst busied himself in their behalf. A widow's pension of sixty dollars a month was secured for Madame Fourchette, on the understanding that she would not seek work, but would stay at home and look after the small children. The Children's Aid made themselves responsible for the children, constituting themselves as sort of guardians of their welfare, their health and their morals. Before the members of this august body, Madame Fourchette humbled herself. They were the fountain of all good things. By catering to them, additional doles could always be secured. Such a country, such luck—sixty dollars a month if she would promise not to work; positions secured for Paul and Adele until school opened; Marie in a good place; Gabriel to join a threshing gang. Her greedy dark eyes glistened.

Nothing could be done with the farm that year, but the woman vowed to herself that she would do some more ploughing, then sow wheat the next year, when Europe could not. Already she saw those green Canadian dollars. They would buy the one hundred and sixty acres next to them, at ten dollars an acre. Oh, they would be rich. Paul and Gabriel would own much land. Give them time, they would be like the Hearsts.

Although Mr. Hearst did everything in his power to aid the family, he grumbled about it to his wife.

"See the people we are letting into the country," he complained. "What are they to us but a bill of expense? What we should do is make things more attractive for our own people, get them over here."

"These Belgians are exceptions," protested his wife. "In nearly every case the Belgians have proved themselves good farmers and thrifty citizens. Certainly the English have not been an unqualified success out here."

"Not a success!" spluttered the man. "Why, my dear woman——"

"Oh, I know," said Laura Hearst. "A few have made it go, but, like ourselves, they had plenty of capital. The ordinary poor settler, if he is English, had a poor chance."

"Laura, such talk! I tell you," pounding the arm of his chair, "the English are the greatest colonizers in the world. You can't deny that."

"But they are more successful in a country where they can have native servants," said Laura. "That you must admit. And where incessant work and self-denial are not absolute necessities. The real settlers, those who have made the country out here, are the men from Ontario, from Scotland, from the States, or the Scandinavian countries. An Englishman, however poor, wants a little leisure, a certain degree of comfort, above all an opportunity to impress his customs and habits on the new country. I do not say for a minute

that these are faults. But they do not make for success in Western Canada. The country needs the patience of the European peasant, for we have over-advertised the land, and only a great patience can stand up against the disappointments that are encountered.

"However, all this is beside the point. Canada's need is not so much newcomers from any nation, as it is the ability to keep them here when she gets them. The population is not growing at the rate immigrants are coming into the country. Did you see Madame Fourchette this morning?"

"Yes, I saw her. I cannot abide that woman," said George Hearst, tersely.

"Nor I," agreed his wife heartily. "I suppose that she is more than delighted with her pension."

"Yes, they are building a wooden house now. Never consulted me at all. Fixed it up between those meddling women, the Children's Aid, and the Cannings, though I could have saved her several dollars by buying the lumber wholesale. However, they should not spend another winter in the sod hut. If Gabriel were a bit of good, I believe that his mother would back him and that they could get the farm in good shape, but he doesn't care about the place."

The two people sat silent for a time, looking across their broad acres to the western sky. The sun had gone behind the blue mountains, which swept, a great semicircle of ramparts, around the western world, their

lofty pinnacles silhouetted against the clear greenish-yellow sky through which the last light glowed.

At length George Hearst cleared his throat as if to speak. No word came. He shifted nervously, making the wicker chair creak in every fibre beneath his heavy weight. The woman spoke.

"What is it George; what is troubling you?"

"Laura—what about Frank?"

"He was talking to me to-day, George. He is going."

The man sighed with relief, though his heart was heavy with sorrow.

"I didn't know. I was worried. You know, Laura, he wasn't brought up in England. He has got away from the army traditions of our family. I could not have blamed him if he had stayed out of it."

"George," protested his wife, "you will always be too English to understand Canadian loyalty to the Empire. You look upon Canada as a child, sometimes as a fractious child. You will not realize that Canada has achieved manhood. It is like a grown son, conscious of his strength, his maturity, his splendid future. Canadians regard Great Britain as a mother to whom they will give love and help when needed, not as a child, because it is bade, but as a grown son who is touched by his old mother's need. The love of Canadians for their mother country is one of the most beautiful and idealistic things in the world to-day. Frank will go, and so will thousands of others, and

England will take their aid as a matter of course—patronizing them a bit. But will that annoy the grown-up sons? Not at all. It will tickle their sense of humor immensely."

"I guess that is true," the man said, fidgetting again. "One hears so much of this independence talk that it frightens one, considering how closely the whole country is linked up with the United States."

"Certainly, they insist on their absolute independence," his wife said, rolling up the ball of grey wool and jabbing her needles into it. "As I said, Canada has attained its maturity. So have Frank and Allan, but, for all that, they go on loving me. I would not expect them to go running to Mrs. Herbert or someone, hunting a new mother."

"Laura, I am going too," blurted out the man.

"Oh, my dear!" There was a long silence. The late Alberta twilight had darkened into night. Mrs. Hearst shivered in the cold air. The great setter, raising its nose, sniffed and howled dismally, and its cousin, the coyote, slid back from the hen house.

Laura Hearst rose and went swiftly to her husband. Long he sat holding her close to him. "We have had wonderful, wonderful years," he murmured.

"Yes," she agreed. "And now, you could not do otherwise."

At breakfast the next morning Mr. Hearst said briefly—

"When do you go, Frank?"

"I would like to go in to enlist to-day, sir."

"Good enough. I am going in to town myself. I am raising a battalion at my own expense."

"Right-o, let Allan and me be your first recruits."

They laughed. "You'll have to be a bit patient about joining up, then," said the older man. "It will take a little time to get things moving. But I would like it, of all things."

Marie sat in silent amazement. These English, had they no feeling; so calm were they. She pictured her own household if Gabriel and her father had been going. Yet she knew how each one of this family loved the others. And then she thought, "After all, we Belgians have courage. It is we who are resisting the enemy, though to give in would be so much easier. My people are sacrificing everything. It is simply a difference in temperament, not in courage."

"What about Grange," suddenly asked the father, as he leisurely spread his toast with marmalade. "Will he come along with us?"

"I am afraid not, father," Frank answered. "He telephoned last night. He is going over to join his own regiment at once. It is already in the thick of it, you know."

The room grew dark to Marie. Queer noises thrummed in her head, as if she were under an anæsthetic. Mrs. Hearst's soft voice seemed to come from a long distance. The girl tried to concentrate on it. She wanted to touch it and capture it. She reached

out her hand unsteadily. The voice again, "Marie, are you ill? George, quick, the poor child!" and the blackness broke as the words formed in it. She smiled a pitiful little twist of a smile up at Frank and George Hearst who had jumped to her side, and were bending anxiously over her.

"I am all right," she answered them. "I just became dizzy. I was in the sun so long yesterday picking the peas."

"I had such a fright, dear," cried Laura Hearst, with relief. "I thought, for a moment, that you were going to faint. Well, you men want to get away." She rose briskly from the table. "You go and get dressed, Frank. I'll give the men any orders that you tell me."

"Oh, by the way," said Frank, "Grange is coming over for the day. Keep him all night, will you, mother? We won't be home until dinner time. He is leaving to-morrow for the East, in order not to miss the first chance of sailing."

After the two men had left, Mrs. Hearst turned to Marie. She looked suddenly tired and old.

"Never mind the work this morning, dear," she said, kissing the girl to hide her quick tears. "Let us take our knitting and books and go to the garden—I need company."

They settled themselves in the big chairs under the poplars and took turns in reading aloud, lapsing, as always, into long discussions which the book evoked.

"This is splendid," said Mrs. Hearst during a pause. "More like last summer, when we spent so many hours together."

"And you taught me all I know," threw in Marie. "Oh, you have been wonderful to me." She leaned over and the two women embraced.

"Little Marie, you are a treasure," said the older woman, deeply moved; then settled herself again before continuing—

"What would you do, dear, if I should decide to go to England? George and I were discussing it last night. We would leave Annie and her husband here to look after things. If we arranged for you to take a business course, would that do?"

"Oh, Mrs. Hearst," cried Marie, with a sob in her voice, but she controlled herself quickly. "I would rather do housework. I must be earning money to help mother. She is building, you know, and although Tom Canning is helping with the work, occasionally, still the lumber is expensive and not paid for yet. The time I would be at business college would be all spending and no earning, then when I have finished, what would I have? Not as much money left out of my salary, once my board was paid, as I would have if I did housework."

"But your position would be better, dear," objected Mrs. Hearst.

"Oh, that," cried Marie, with a snap of her fingers, "I care not that for my position. I want to be great

inside of myself, not outside. If I do housework I shall have many afternoons to go on with my reading, and long peaceful evenings."

"You are right, child, as always," agreed her friend heartily. "I am sure that Gertrude would be glad to have you. I expect that Allan will be married at once, now."

They talked over their future plans in detail, and then turned to their reading again. It was thus Grange found them.

Marie had been aware of his approach for many minutes. Laura Hearst, her mind intent on what she was reading, had not noticed him. But the girl, her senses sharpened by love, had seen him far away, had heard his horse's hoofs beating. For a few moments she had mistrusted her eyes and ears. During the last few days every man glimpsed had seemed, for a second, to be Grange, and her heart had raced at the thought. But now, it was he. Her pulses beat madly as his horse turned in at the gate.

"Good morning, Aunt Lol."

Mrs. Hearst jumped up and turned in surprise.

"Grange, my dear boy."

The young man put his hands on her shoulders and looked down into that kind, brown face, so suddenly old. He stooped and kissed her.

"Dear little Aunt Lol," he said tenderly.

"Grange," pleaded the woman. "I shall be reduced to a pulp if you say a word."

"I know," he answered hastily, his eyes widening in alarm. "I am not going to say anything."

They all laughed at that, and Grange shook hands with Marie. They were both seized with a sudden shyness and did not look at each other. Mrs. Hearst spoke of Frank, of her husband's plans. They discussed the war, always the war. Marie sat silent, watching Grange intently, as if she could never satisfy herself with looking. He was beautiful, beautiful. He lay, his long, lithe body half stretched out on the grass at Mrs. Hearst's feet, the dappling leaf shadows dancing over him, the warm sun lighting his eyes, shining on his smooth hair and skin. His strong, brown hands plucked at the half dry grass. His cultured English voice rose and fell as he conversed with Mrs. Hearst, now busy with her knitting, but his thoughts were busy. He must see Marie. He must have Marie to himself before he went. He half turned his head to look at her and surprised her intense gaze. He caught his breath quickly, and a mad joy filled him. She loved him, that he knew; and he loved her. What else mattered? Confused, the girl murmured vaguely of luncheon and sped to the house.

The mid-day meal was a difficult one for both of them. Their eyes were constantly meeting, then glancing aside. They would not look again. They tried to concentrate on what Mrs. Hearst was saying; they would listen with exaggerated attention, and try

to discuss the subject intelligently—and then, once more, their seeking eyes would search each other's gaze.

After the meal, Grange, having settled Mrs. Hearst on the verandah, went in search of Marie. She was in the pantry, where she always went after luncheon, to arrange the tea tray. This time, there were no preliminaries.

"Little Marie, when may I see you alone?" asked Grange in a low voice, as he stood at the pantry door watching the girl's deft fingers hovering over the tray.

"Oh, should we?" asked Marie, in distress.

"We must, dear," answered Grange. "This is good-bye, you know."

The girl, white to the very lips, nodded dumbly.

A little triangular frown appeared between Grange's brows. He, too, was suffering. She was so sweet! He wanted to crush her to him now, to smother her with kisses. The beauty of her, the freshness!

"As you are Mrs. Hearst's guest," said Marie, with that little dignity so characteristic of her, "I think that it would be better if you asked her permission to take me for a ride. After dinner would be the best time. It would not be kind to leave her alone to-day."

They went to Mrs. Hearst on the verandah, and the two women knitted and chatted until tea time. Grange became more silent, more deeply plunged in love, more impatient of the dragging hours. After tea, the men came back from the city. Grange watched his chance, when Marie was helping Annie with the

dinner and the men were dressing, to make known his wish.

"Aunt Lol," he said, going over and leaning on the verandah rail opposite, "have I your permission to take Marie for a ride after dinner?" He did not fail to note the start of surprise.

"Why, Grange," Mrs. Hearst spoke hesitatingly. "I—I suppose so. Why yes, surely."

She looked up at the man, puzzled.

"My request surprises you," smiled Grange, brushing his little moustache.

"Yes, it does a little," confessed his companion. "You know, Grange," she looked seriously up at him, "I am very fond of Marie."

"So am I," laughed the man.

"Well, as long as you are that frank about it, I guess it is all right," said Laura Hearst, laughing also.

"Shall we ride into the sunset again?" asked Marie, as they cantered along the road after dinner.

"Not this evening," said Grange. "We are going over to that little poplar bluff on the right, as you go into Crosston. It slopes down to a slough where there are some little rocks against which the water laps, and we can close our eyes and imagine ourselves on the shore of a great lake." They scarcely spoke. It was still light when they came to the little woods, although the sun had gone. Leaving the horses at the edge, they wandered slowly, hand in hand, towards the water. In the shelter of the trees, Grange took

the girl in his arms and kissed her passionately. She felt no surprise; she received his kisses eagerly. In some way, that second, in her mother's little sod hut, they had become definitely aware of each other's love. To-day they had but verified it. It seemed to need no declaring. They sat down by the water's edge, Grange's arm about Marie, and they talked softly of his going, of Mrs. Hearst's going.

"But what will you do, sweetheart?" he cried, in alarm.

"I shall go in to Calgary and do housework," answered Marie.

"No, you can't do that," said the man decidedly.

"But why not?" asked the girl. "I must work. In a home I have privacy, I have leisure most of my afternoons and evenings, I have good food and shelter. I am going to read, to study so much. I shall have the peoples' library, what you call it—the city library. Mrs. Hearst says that Allan will marry before he goes to the war and I shall work for his wife."

"Well," consented Grange, partly appeased, "that won't be so bad. Oh, Marie," he cried, impatiently, holding her close, "if only——" But he left his thoughts unfinished.

After a long silence, he spoke again.

"You will pray for me, little Marie?" He could not forbear his little touches of sentimentality, being a man. But this girl must have disconcerting truth.

"Yes," she said wearily, "I shall pray. So many shall be praying to the Good God and Our Mother for help, all the German sweethearts and mothers, all the French, all the women of the world. It would seem as if there must not be too many people on the earth. War or some catastrophe always looks after that, famine in thickly populated countries, or earthquakes."

"Marie, that does not sound right."

"Ah," cried the girl, bitterly, "I would rather think that than that some doddering, stupid old men could put the world in such a mess. I don't care what people prate about as the causes of the war; it was just gross stupidity. And now these old men cry to the youths of the world: 'Come see what we have done. We need your lives to make things right again.' And will you have a chance to see that it does not occur again? None at all. When the war is over, and you all come back, maimed body and soul, or come not at all, they will say, 'Thank you, thank you, please not to bother us now. We have great affairs to arrange for the world.' And they will begin blundering all over again. And my sweet meadow, that seemed to hang pendant in the world that day, it will be drenched with blood again. Poor Belgium, always the battleground, and my own poor people." The girl was all Belgian now. She burst into a torrent of weeping. Grange tried to comfort her, wiping away her tears with his handkerchief, kissing her gently as he would a child. And Marie nestled closer into the

protection of his arms and her shuddering sobs were slowly stilled.

In perfect adoration of the man, slowly the girl raised his hand to her forehead, her eyes, her lips; and they were both afire with love and longing for each other. They clung together, oblivious of everything but each other's nearness, each other's hot kisses. The opalescent night closed down on the broad, brooding land that was pregnant with the life of the world. The coyote howled, like the cry of famine from the far lands. Marie drew back.

"No, Grange," she pleaded. "Just kiss me, gently, kindly," but the man, aflame with his passion, caught her to him again.

"Why not, Marie; how many years before we are together again? We love each other, God knows we do. Why are you afraid, you, who are so wonderful, to be afraid of a marvellous experience—Oh, be kind, my dear, be kind."

"But, Grange," her hard little hands cupped his face and pushed it gently from her. "You must listen. You are talking like a modern novel, with your 'experiences'. What we want has nothing to do with the case. Why should I experience adultery for my soul's fulfilment, any more than theft or murder? The memory of our longing for each other will be sweeter than the memory of our passion. When I awake in the many long nights to come and think of this hour, let me not be as a swimmer who, roused from

a dream, shudders at the thoughts of dark waters and dangerous caverns, but rather as one who remembers all the fresh sweetness of the white frilled sunny waves on a sandy shore. Oh, Grange, I love you; I want you. Take care of me."

They clung together like two children and their tears mingled. Grange upbraided and railed at himself, begging her forgiveness, but Marie would hear none of that. He held her gently in his arms. A great peace stole over them.

A horse's shoe clinking on a stone aroused Marie. She started up. It was all dark about her. She breathed in the sweetness of the night and then awoke to understanding. This dear, warm nearness, that wrapped her about, was Grange. They had been sleeping, heaven only knows how long. The girl stirred and shook him gently.

"Grange, my dear, we have been sleeping. Wake yourself."

"Asleep, no! Oh, Marie, what a dream." He caught her and held her close. "Kiss me, sweetheart, kiss me good-bye."

Their lips clung together, then they arose. Their hands were tightly clasped and grudgingly they gave each other up, groping towards the opening of the bluff, where the patient horses waited.

"What is the time?" asked Marie, in a low voice. Grange looked at his watch.

"Scarcely ten," he said, with a soft laugh. "What a night! So much joy in less than three short hours."

They mounted and the horses, fearful of badger and gopher holes, picked their way daintily along. The riders talked quietly, feeling exhausted and subdued after the fierce emotional crisis through which they had passed. Each one was thinking, "This may be my last ride, my last hour, with my beloved," storing it away for memories.

At the gate of the lane, Grange put his hand on Lady's bridle.

"Little Marie," he said, huskily, "if I come back—" He broke off and started again. "Little Marie, let me hear you say it again, definitely, solemnly—do you love me?"

A little cry escaped from the girl's tortured heart.

"I have always loved you. I always will," she said simply.

"And you forgive me, Marie? How often have I had to beg your forgiveness?"

"Oh, that—that is but our great love," said the girl, quickly. "There is nothing to forgive. And you, Grange," she continued, wistfully, "You understand, you know that I love you and want you as you want me?"

"Yes, dear," said the man. "I know that you are an angel. And now kiss me good-bye. It is not likely that I shall have an opportunity of seeing you alone again."

The next morning, the family gathered on the porch to say good-bye to Grange.

"Oh," murmured Mrs. Hearst to Marie, "that he should have to go—so handsome, so magnificent, an English gentleman."

"Well, lad," said Mr. Hearst, "we'll see you over there. We are all going."

"Good enough," cried Grange heartily. "I'll keep in touch with you."

He kissed Mrs. Hearst. "Good-bye, Aunt Lol," it was his pet name for her. "You have been so good to me."

"Nothing at all, my dear boy. It will be jolly when this is over and we are all back again. My love to your mother and look up my nephews. I don't think that they are in France yet."

Grange said good-bye to Annie and her husband, and then he walked over to Marie, who was standing at the steps. He held out his hand and she took it. The girl had gone deathly pale and not a word would come to either. The soldier's heart was anguished. Then Marie remembered. The Hearsts sent their soldiers away without a tear, a smile on their faces. She would be worthy of her English soldier.

"Cheerio," she smiled, her dimples showing at the corner. The English expression, spoken with the little touch of accent, made them all laugh delightedly.

"You darling," whispered Grange, under cover of the laugh. He ran down the steps and was soon

trotting down the lane. He turned at the gate to wave the last farewell.

Marie was not on the verandah.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE summer blazed into autumn glory. Now the grain was stooked for miles around, and once more the threshing gangs travelled over the land. In some places the crops were good, in some, no crops at all. Young men were impatiently waiting to get the last of their grain to the elevators that they might enlist, but the ducks had come, rested on the sloughs, and gone; the wild grey goose had drilled in hundreds, high across the sky, and reached the south before this was accomplished. The drab-grey prairies and the foothills took on their autumn color. In the fall Alberta achieves its greatest beauty. The air is cool and sweet and clear. The Rockies stand out glistening with the fresh snow upon their crests, against a sky so deep a blue, so clear, it seems as if another sun shone from behind the void, its light filtering through. All the wooded hillsides blaze with color. The poplars throb into the air, their stored up golden sunlight. Every leaf a glory, a fulfillment of their worship of the sun. Their slender grey-green trunks stand delicately against a sky whose truant clouds of whiteness echo the shining peaks. The rose and saskatoon bushes spill like red wine over the fruity-coloured hills. The tall spruce coldly with-

drawing from the passionate light point to the unseen stars. For fifty miles the prairie can be seen, stretched out to uphold the lofty dome of the sky. In the high, rare atmosphere it all lies, clear and limpid, like a well-cut jewel.

Marie stayed on at Clovelly. Mr. Hearst was busy getting matters arranged about his battalion. Frank was staying at the farm until things were more advanced. Allan had married quietly and, after installing his wife in her new home, gave up his business and helped his father. Mr. Hearst, of course, was rarely at home. Every letter from England was a sword thrust to Mrs. Hearst's aching heart. Nephews and cousins were going over to France, then word of wounds or death. The whole family was impatient to be gone.

The house was finally settled for their long absence. All but the rooms at the back of the house, where Annie and her husband would live, were closed. Already the garden looked neglected, for the usual fall work had not been done. All over Canada, the sons were going home. How many ranches were abandoned, how many farms deserted? From the Atlantic to the Pacific, they went. To this day, all through the Okanagan Fruit Valley, the plains of Alberta, the wide fields of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, are these deserted spots, grim monuments of the death of hope, of ambition, of youth.

It had been arranged that Marie would go to Gertrude, Allan's bride.

"I could not bear to think of you just any place," said Mrs. Hearst. "Gertrude understands all that you are to me." Mr. and Mrs. Hearst drove Marie over to the Fourchette place, where she was to spend a week or so before going into the city. Madame Fourchette, peering through the window, saw their sad leave-taking and their fond embraces. She sniffed contemptuously.

"That's the end of these people, sure enough, and the Good Lord be praised. May we have cause to think of them no more. Tom Canning would not be the softy my man was." When Madame Fourchette, the prettiest girl in the village, for obvious reasons, could be but an onlooker at the fête of the virgins, nevertheless at the fête had met Henri Fourchette, come north to buy cattle. She had thought herself well out of her trouble when they had married.

Marie entered the little wooden shack, her eyes still swollen with weeping. Her dear friends; would she ever see them again? She felt as if, for a year or more, she had been lifted high into Heaven and then cast into utter darkness. What had she now, in all the world, to live for? Grange? She dared not think of him. Only one letter, which she had so laboriously answered, then this long silence. Nearly four months had he been gone, and already he was like a dream, a wonderful being, a god distant and remote, to be wor-

shipped. Had his lips pressed hers, his arms held her close? Had she slept in his arms, close to the earth she loved, the dim trees like ghosts whispering about them. Ah, no, it could not be, it was madness to think that it ever was. Only his strong, slim hands were real—so brown, so shapely. She felt their restless pressing on her shoulders, their coolness on her brow, her eyes. Oh God, was this all to feed her mighty passion, her yearning heart. Her mother talked and chattered, the girl scarcely answering. Such troubles as the woman had. She poured them out—a never-ceasing stream into the ears of her daughter. The Children's Aid would not let Gabriel work all winter. Was there ever such nonsense. He must go to school.

"That is why they give you the sixty dollars, mamma, so that you can keep the children," explained Marie.

"Sixty dollars," screamed the woman, indignantly. "What were sixty little dollars, with six children to feed and haled out and all?" It was a plot. They gave her sixty dollars and made slaves of her and her children, sure enough. If Gabriel could not work, they would have to give her more money. She owed for her lumber and the man was pressing for payment. Marie must send out all of her first month's wages. It would keep him quiet. Was the house not grand? She was like a child with its first doll house.

"Oh, I have curtains for you," said Marie, brightening. "Mrs. Hearst sent over so many things."

She went to her little box and brought forth her treasures. Curtains for every room, a table cover, two china vases, some cups and saucers, a vegetable dish, a lamp that hung from the ceiling, two pictures and, glory of glories, a clock—a big clock that hung on the wall. Madame Fourchette was radiant. The donor was a saint, an angel. Marie laughed with delight at her mother's happiness. The children came in from school and the treasures were again displayed and exclaimed about.

Then Marie, who had saved her biggest surprise to the last, said impressively—

"And guess what else? The man is bringing it over to-morrow."

"A chair, a table, a bed, perhaps." They jumped up and down in their excitement.

"A buffet!" said Marie, solemnly. "So big, with a big mirror, and fancy little shelves at the sides of it, and brass handles on the doors and drawers, of shining oak it is."

That was too much. The only answer was a long-drawn "Oh" of wonder. Already Madame Fourchette saw it against the wall. Bigger than Mrs. Canning's, perhaps. Ah, but they were coming on. She became all impatience. Why had Marie not told the man to bring it over to-day, why did they all sit idle? Up with the curtains, hang the pictures. She herself spread the table cover over the greasy table, patting the edges with her finger tips to make it exactly straight.

Gabriel and Paul came home again, and all the children started back to school before Marie left her mother. The poor woman had more work than she could manage. The pigs to feed, the chickens to care for, the food to cook, the small children to look after. But what Marie dreaded most of all for her was the long, cold drive in the winter to take the milk to the railway. Gabriel helped as much as he could, as also did the other children, but that they could not do. However, Madame Fourchette had the stolid peasant attitude towards heavy tasks. She accepted them uncomplainingly.

"You must sell the cows, mother," said Marie. "You have plenty of money to live on. There are the hens that Mrs. Hearst gave you. They will help. If we had money to buy a churn, you could make butter and take it in once a week; but that will come later. Even that would be hard. You know what a job it was this year to get feed for the cows, and the water—how we pumped in that awful cold!"

"If we keep the place, we'll have nothing but wheat," threw in Gabriel. "Then we'll make enough money to get rid of the cows and chickens and everything, and buy what we need to eat."

"You will never make enough money at wheat to keep you alive," Marie said, with a shake of her head. "Not in this dry country."

"Other farmers do," protested Gabriel.

"Yes, farmers on two or three sections, like the

Hearsts with their two thousand acres, but not on one hundred and sixty acres, like ours. Frank says you'll never have any luck with wheat unless you sow on summer-fallow, which cuts your land in half, or else rotate your crops."

"Of course, he knows everything," sneered Gabriel. "One thing is certain—we'll give up the place rather than be tied to it with pigs and cows and chickens, never able to get away, working early and late."

"Give up the farm!" cried Madame Fourchette, busy with setting the table. "That you will not. For what did we come to this far land? If you don't want it, Paul shall have it when he is a man," she threatened.

"Not I, mamma," answered Paul, glancing up from his book. Paul had other plans. He was a silent boy, never seeming to take part in the family quarrels or discussions, holding himself aloof, deep in his books. He spoke purer English than any of the others, including Marie, refusing to lapse into his native tongue, saying that he would take it up again when he had mastered the new one. He was his teacher's favorite, who loaned him books for studying, talked to him, pointing out the many paths that led away from the land of success. He would never do a dirty job about the place as Marie did, thoroughly and with her whole heart, because it needed doing; as Gabriel, hating it, protesting about it, wallowing in it. He did the work efficiently, swiftly, but without interest, as if he would

not allow his mind to be contaminated with the filth, as one able to be unconscious of it because he could so entirely withdraw his inner self from it.

He did not annoy his mother by his reiterated statements that he would not stay on the farm. He never brought down on his head a storm of abuse from her because he said he hated it, as Gabriel did. He simply never mentioned it. Yet every member of the family knew that he would not stay. Paul was a handsome boy, tall for his age, unlike Gabriel, who had inherited his father's heavy features and stocky body.

Marie would gladly have stayed with her mother all winter had it been possible. She dreaded the thought of going into the city, she, who loved the broad lands of Alberta. At nights she would slip out of the shack into the immense wonder of the country. Overhead, the northern lights would dance and stream, the stars not stud the sky, but sparkle, suspended in the cold void. Now the ground was white with a light covering of snow. The coyote, a slipping shadow, hugged the wire fence. Into the night would it call, like the cry of her lonely soul. Through her whole body would flood the longing for her lover. Only by swift walking would she find peace, surcease from the pain in her heart. She thought that in the city she would stifle.

PART TWO



IN THE CITY

CHAPTER I.

“SO this is Marie!”

Gertrude Hearst stood in the doorway of her little stucco bungalow, smiling. Allan's bride was very little older than Marie herself, and in a frail, Dresden-china way, amazingly pretty. Marie stepped into the hall, struggling with her big paper bundle that held her few belongings.

“I'll take you up to your room now.” Gertrude Hearst led the way, the high heels of her tiny satin slippers clicking on the gleaming hardwood stairs.

“When you change your things, will you come down?” she asked, sweetly. “It will be just time for luncheon.”

The door closed on her. Marie was alone, and the worst ordeal of coming to Calgary was over. Mrs. Hearst had said repeatedly—

“You'll be one of the family at Gertrude's. It is an ideal arrangement. With Allan overseas, Gertrude will need a young companion like you. It makes me so happy to think of you two girls living together.”

Marie had rather dreaded the intimacy. She had met Gertrude the week-end that Constance Howard was at Clovelly, but had detected a cool aloofness in her manner towards herself. Gertrude knew exactly

Marie's position in the household, and Marie's intellectual gifts were things that she discounted. Marie could not conjure up a picture of them spending long happy evenings together by the fire, discussing books or exchanging ideas, as could Mrs. Hearst. Mrs. Hearst, a cultured English woman, secure in her social position, accepted the people whom she thought worthy, and expected that her friends would also accept them once she had set the seal of her approval on them.

But it was different with Gertrude Hearst. She was pretty and vivacious. Her father was rich and they were old-timers; that is, they had been in the country about twenty years. All these things made it possible for her to be one of the leaders of the younger set. She was a little "Lady", no doubt about that, such a lady that one wondered how long she had been one. And that is just where the difference came in between her acceptance of Marie and Mrs. Hearst's. She had not the sense of security that her mother-in-law had attained through generations of good breeding. She dared not do the simple little things she wanted to do unless she knew them to be the correct things to do. And she wasn't going to start off her career as a young matron by making a chum of her maid! No matter how much mother Hearst raved about the girl, it simply wasn't done. And who can blame Gertrude! Her father had been the head barber of a hotel in the old days, then he had bought a saloon,

then a hotel, then he had built a great barracks of a house in Mount Royal and the family had arrived socially. Rumour had it that his wife had been a cook in the first hotel—but people were always exaggerating. Not that all that was anything to be ashamed of. Many family fortunes of Gertrude's set were founded in similar ways. But people were always ready to criticize and she was not taking any risks, not now, just when she had solidified her position, jumped right to the top of the social ladder by marrying a Hearst.

Marie, with her quick sensitiveness, had grasped all this with the girl's first little smile, her first words, and she had been vastly relieved. She longed for solitude, above all things. She glanced about her dainty little room. Dotted muslin curtains were on the window and chintz hangings; a little cream enamelled chiffonier and single bed with dainty covers, even a small easy chair and a little table, comprised the furnishings. Little pink rag rugs were on the hardwood floor. The room, to be sure, was small, but so was the furniture. There was no effect of over-crowding. Oh, she was lucky.

She put her hat and coat in the clothes closet, and started to undo her bundle, then her hand paused. Mrs. Hearst had said to come down as soon as she had changed. It dawned on Marie that she had meant, "As soon as you have put on your uniform". She should have had one like Annie's. The girl was furious

with herself for not having thought of it. She slipped on a little gingham frock and went downstairs.

Gertrude Hearst came to her in the tiny blue and white kitchen and showed Marie how to light the gas, where the things were, what to prepare for luncheon. As she was leaving the kitchen, she said—

“Have you your own uniforms, Marie?”

“No, I have none. I was waiting until I came to the city to get them.”

A shade of relief passed over Gertrude’s face.

“Oh, never mind,” she said. “I’ll order some for you when I go down town.”

Marie enjoyed her work. She took almost as much pride in the little house as did its mistress. At Clovelly there was a big spacious easiness about the place, the rugs were beautiful but shabby, the furniture polished as only time can do it. The cushions were meant for comfort, the books were within reach of an easy chair and the easy chairs were worn almost threadbare. When one snuggled down for an hour with a book, there was light at one’s shoulder, a big ash tray at one’s elbow. It had been a peep into treasure land for Marie, as Mrs. Hearst explained why this rug was valuable, that bit of china unreplaceable, a certain picture a masterpiece. Almost every object in the house had a value other than its commercial worth, revealing the owner’s taste or knowledge.

In Gertrude’s house the furnishings were the best that money could buy in that small city, but there

was not one thing that her next door neighbor, provided she had sufficient funds, could not go down to the stores and duplicate. This was as Gertrude Hearst wished it. In this very way her friends could accurately judge her possessions. And the effect was charming. There could be no doubt about that. The colour scheme was excellent, and if a cushion justified its existence solely because it echoed the colour of the candles in their silver holders, it was pleasing nevertheless.

Of course, for Marie, the work was easy after toiling on a farm. The house was a little model of convenience, equipped with many electric labour-saving devices. It was like a doll's house, where the beautiful mistress and maid played at housekeeping.

Allan Hearst came down from Edmonton for a short visit. Marie unavoidably overheard his mild protests about her position in the household.

"I'm sure, dear, mother never thought of that, the uniform and everything, though the girl certainly looks stunning in it, that white band across her brow is wonderful. She pictures the two of you chumming together down here."

"I know," said his wife, perching on his knee and smoothing out his worried wrinkle. "But I wouldn't take the girl at all under those conditions, and then where would she be?"

"What does Marie think of it?"

"She is perfectly satisfied; why not? And she certainly has an easy place. She has hours to herself."

And Marie *was* satisfied.

"If I am a maid, I want to look like a good one," she had thought, as she slipped on her little black dress and apron. "And I can learn so much here." But she shrugged her shoulders hopelessly as she said it.

She had answered Grange's first letter. Then there had been a long silence. She feared that he would not know her new address, and that if he wrote to the farm her mother would destroy the letter, so she wrote to him again, just a short note telling him where she was. Every day the postman came. Marie would hear the letter box rattle, the letters fall with a little thud on the floor. Her heart would turn over. She would prolong her hope, by saying, "I shall not look until I have finished all the dishes", or else she would go and pick them up, saying, "I know that there is not one for me. I am not even expecting one." But her eager eyes had gauged each letter before she had them in her hand, and her heart was sick with hope deferred.

One day, while serving tea, during one of Gertrude's never-ending tea parties, she heard one of the girls say—

"I had a letter from Grange Houltain to-day."

Marie felt her heart choke her. A mist came before her eyes. She scarcely breathed lest she miss the rest of the conversation.

"Grange? the old dear," said the other girl. "Isn't he the best looking thing ever? I'm mad about him. What did he have to say; is he in France yet?"

"Oh, yes, apparently right in the thick of it. He joined his old regiment, you know."

"Who's this—Grange Houltain?" broke in another girl. "No use being keen about him. Constance is back in England. Did any of you go to the Orpheum this week?"

Marie fled to the kitchen. Out of her dreams of days gone by came vivid memories, so often denied when she tried to summon them. Oh, it had all been true. He *had* loved her. None of these girls with their money, their position, their pretty clothes, knew Grange as she did. She, to whom he had laid bare his very soul. She, who had felt his hot tears of love and desire on her lips, who had longed to solace him. But Constance Howard was in England; and Marie had had no letters. She went back to the living room with the teapot.

These friends of Gertrude Hearst's were a source of constant amazement to Marie. She knew only two families, besides her own. The Hearsts at Clovelly, cultured English people, and the Cannings. From these two examples, she had jumped to the conclusion that all people above her own stratum in life were like her Clovelly friends. Now here was a totally different class again. Gertrude Hearst's friends were, for the most part, young matrons like herself. They met

almost daily at one another's house for cards or knitting, and a cup of tea. They were well-groomed, fairly well-mannered girls. They talked of movie shows, dress, and people whom they knew. They never mentioned a book, unless it was a thrilling best seller. They were not interested in music or drama or any of the arts. They never exchanged an idea. Their vocabulary was limited to the simplest words in the language, interspersed with little staccato exclamations of words having a vogue at the time, such as "My dear", "Absolutely", "Rather!". They adored their husbands as a child would adore a fond uncle on whom it could rely for a bag of candies when it wanted one, but they gave very little, even of companionship, to them. They had not much to give.

And their husbands were well satisfied. They worked themselves to the limit to give their wives clothes, motors, pretty homes, in which they worked in the morning, and from which they fled in the afternoon and evening. Typical Canadian husbands, to them love meant sacrifice, not companionship. The older women had slightly broader interests. They would talk of sins, servants and surgery. They had outlived the adoration period of the younger matrons, and frankly discussed their husbands with a candor that shocked Marie.

There was one girl, Elizabeth, whose intellectual gifts were evidently a worry to her friends. Gertrude

Hearst beckoned one of her guests out to the kitchen one afternoon and whispered hurriedly—

"Don't, for goodness sake, let Elizabeth get started on her high-brow stuff."

"Leave it to me," assured her friend. "I'll watch her and get the conversation switched. It would be just like her to crab your party."

Later, Marie heard a querulous little voice saying—

"But, Elizabeth, it isn't nearly as bad for you, having your husband away. You read."

"Then why not read yourself, Anne?"

"Oh, I don't know, I get so bored if I do."

"What do you do, the evenings that you are alone?"

"Oh, I don't know. I sometimes play solitaire. I am hemming some table napkins now."

"And that doesn't bore you?" smiled the girl Elizabeth.

Marie, noting the full figure of the pretty little girl, thought. "Poor little thing, like a little brood mare," and pictured their shudder of disgust if they had heard such words.

Yet these women were not stupid. They played a clever game of bridge, and were sometimes rather quick at repartee. But they had no power of enjoyment within themselves.

Marie had come to Gertrude Hearst's house with ears and eyes wide open. She soon realized that she could learn little by listening, but Gertrude and her friends would have been amazed had they known under

what sharp observation they were. The little maid flattered herself that she could serve a formal tea as well as she could serve it in the cozy, intimate way that it was done at Clovelly. She was as keen to know the correct details of entertaining and house-keeping as her mistress was that she should know.

Thursday afternoons and evenings were her biggest trials. Gertrude Hearst insisted on her going out and staying from three o'clock until ten. During the winter this was all right. Marie would walk down to the public library and change her books, spending long, happy hours browsing among the magazines. Then she would slip out to one of the cheap restaurants for supper and back to the library again. Twice they had telephoned her from "The Girl's Club", an organization that ran a large boarding house for working girls, to go down and have supper there. There was a special meal served for domestics Thursday evenings and a little social gathering after. The Children's Aid had given them Marie's name. The girl only went once. She felt that she had nothing in common with the other girls. She also resented the air of proprietorship one of the officials had with her; the woman's intimate knowledge of her family's condition and her long lectures on the evils of a city.

In the spring and summer this did not satisfy Marie. She longed to be out of doors, and had so few opportunities that she seized every one. No work is more lonely than that of a domestic, if she is the only one

in a household, and Marie, surrounded all her life by a large family, was keenly conscious of this. The spring made her restless. She took less interest in her reading and longed for companionship in her walks. On her free days she would explore and delight in the little city among the foothills. She had only seen the large, smoky cities of the old land, and Calgary, with its clear brilliant atmosphere, its lack of smoke, its riot of flowers in summer time was a constant delight. From the higher parts of the town one glimpsed straight streets, clean buildings, rivers gleaming in the sun, white houses straggling up the hills; all oddly like a drop curtain freshly painted. It was a fair city, cupped in by rolling foothills, which at evening filled up to the very brim with an indescribably elusive, wholly wonderful, pink light, that shimmered in a purple haze to the blue Rockies.

Over the hills Marie would wander, the fresh breeze from the mountains fanning her cheeks, glad to be out and free again, where her gaze could travel as far as the eye could reach. But now the wondrous clouds of sunset brought stinging tears to her eyes, the thin crescent of the moon eluded, withdrew; the song of the meadow lark was plaintive; for loneliness gripped her heart. She would try to fancy Grange by her side, summon up the memory of his voice, see his teeth flashing beneath his little moustache as he made a laughing remark; or his deep amber eyes defiantly telling her of his love before the others. She would

frenziedly stumble on. "Grange, Grange, my dear, how could you?" was the cry of her heart.

Tom Canning, in town on business for a few days, telephoned her and, to her amazement, Marie was glad to hear from him. They went for a long walk the following Thursday and to a movie in the evening. Tom had not bothered her with any attempt at intimacies. Twice, at her home, he had let her know that he was willing to marry her, and intimated that if she knew on which side her bread was buttered she would grasp at the opportunity. For her mother's sake, she had answered evasively, explaining that she could not think of marriage yet, as her mother needed her help financially. Tom told her all the news of home. Gabriel was working again and getting fair wages. Paul had refused to leave school until the term was ended. Adele was working, getting prettier every day, and was a "young devil". The country was looking wonderful and there would be a heavy crop if the rains kept up. Tom had decided not to go to California yet; things looked too good in Canada. As long as the war kept up there would be good jobs for a young fellow. His people were going to make a fortune in wheat.

"We've taken on another quarter section," the young man said. "We're bound to have crops now."

"What was mother able to do?" asked Marie.

"Nothing. Gabriel couldn't work the place alone, didn't want to anyway. He was too keen for wages.

A man had offered to rent their land but Madame Fourchette wanted too high a price and he has taken another place."

Marie enjoyed the show, the home gossip, the companionship, after her months of loneliness. Sunday was also spent with Tom. They rode in the afternoon. It was wonderful to be in the country again, to see the sky, so high and beautiful, to feel again that old exultation, to canter through the Indian Reserve, scaring the game, making the saucy gophers scamper, passing the Indians smoking in front of their tepees, looking like ancient picture writing as one flashed by. Tom was forgotten, even Grange, except for the deep ache of longing that was ever present. Just to feel the lope of the horse, the sun like wine, the clear air that pierced to the bottom of one's lungs, was enough. Poor Tom, he was not so bad. Marie glanced back and smiled. He speeded up his horse and they raced away together.

That night, when they had come home from church, standing on the little back porch, Tom took Marie in his arms and kissed her. His lips tried to meet hers, but they pecked at her ear. She wanted, with all her heart, to like his caresses, to like him. She drew back with a little shiver.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom.

"Don't do that. I don't like it." Marie spoke sharply, rubbing her cheeks vigorously.

"Gee, your funny," the boy laughed awkwardly.

"Why funny?" asked Marie coldly.

"Not to like being kissed."

"Well, I don't, so please remember," she said curtly.

However, she promised to spend the following Thursday with Tom, but that would be the last, just one more glorious ride.

CHAPTER II.

GERTRUDE HEARST went to Vancouver in the fall. The little bungalow was closed. Marie, longing for the country, secured work not far from her home, and spent all her spare time there. That fall the whole of Western Canada was swept up in a wave of prosperity. The crops were wonderful, running, in many cases, sixty bushels to an acre and the quality of the best. Prices in wheat soared daily. A mad optimism has always marked the growth of the west and retarded its progress. It had led to the subdividing of Edmonton, the capital of a province of about half a million people, over an area greater than London, and the laying of concrete pavements far beyond the city proper, for which the people still pay burdensome taxes. It had caused the people of Calgary, during the oil boom, to stand in long queues awaiting their opportunity to buy worthless oil stock, from men sitting at rough pine tables at the street corners. These men had to carry the money received for stock certificates of no value, to the banks in clothes baskets; good money that should have been put back into the country. Later, people with a twist of dry humor, papered their bedrooms with these certificates, but to many they

were documents of lost hopes, taking the place of the college diplomas which their children should have had.

And now the farmers were in the grip of the same old optimism. The days of dollar wheat, of drought, of early frost, of hail, were gone. Never again, apparently, would the song of the voracious grasshopper be heard in the land. This was the great beginning. They talked of millions and millions of bushels of wheat. They seemed to think that the war would last forever and Europe never again produce grain. They sold their stock, locked their doors and went to California for the winter. They bought expensive motor cars. It began to look as if the chief export of the province was money, not wheat or cattle.

The Fourchettes shared to a certain extent in the general prosperity. Wages were high, even for Paul, who worked in July and August. People were generous, for money flowed liberally. Tom Canning disgusted Marie with his open gloating over the war. Madame Fourchette railed against fate and Gabriel, that they had not sown wheat, and Marie came upon her one day struggling with their one horse and the rusty plough.

"Mother, you can't do that," protested the girl. "If Gabriel won't help, you will have to hire a man."

Madame Fourchette wiped the sweat from her forehead with her grimy apron.

"What can I do?" She shrugged. "We pay a man to plough, and maybe next year, hail or early

frost will come. Oh," she pounded the handle of the plough with her heavy hand, "acres we have, acres I never dared dream of, and no one to till them. All through the night I smell the good smell of ripe grain and none of it is ours."

"Then why didn't you rent, when you had the chance?"

"I thought that if they were not taken, Gabriel would work them," she whimpered. "Oh, by Our Lady, it is pitiful! We toil, we plan for our children, and they discard it all. We can give them life, but not their way of living. We dream dreams for them, and—" she swept her arm, indicating the broad fields "—our dreams come true, but they turn away impatiently, wanting only their own dreams." The woman wept for Gabriel, her best beloved.

Marie's heart ached for her.

"You will have to get a man for a few days, mother. You will lose the land if we make no payments and do no work on it. I brought over some of these cuttings from Clovelly."

The older woman was somewhat appeased. Mother and daughter went up to the house, eagerly planning the laying out of trees and bushes. Madame Fourchette's three-roomed shack was a never-ending joy to her. She spent hours planning the great kitchen that would be added one day, with a huge range in it, glittering with nickel, and a tank for hot water at the back. A range with a shining shelf above, where the

coffee could be kept always hot. In other words, a range such as Mrs. Canning had. She would have a garden, and perhaps a verandah. The years would pass and she would sit and knit by the cozy stove, such warm little garments for Gabriel's children; the little Canadians that they would be! Not speaking a word but English, sure enough! Gabriel would be a big farmer in the country then.

Marie and her mother gathered up the cuttings.

"I don't know," said the older woman, dubiously. "It doesn't seem right to plant them in the fall."

"Annie said that if you do it in the spring the growth will be disturbed. It is better now, then they get a start. Where is Gabriel? He'll dig for us."

"Don't bother the boy. We can dig," said the mother, hastily.

But they met Gabriel as they went down the path, their arms laden with their treasures.

"Here you are," cried Marie. "We want you to dig a trench for us."

"What do you want that dug for?" asked Gabriel, looking at his mother.

"I am going to plant these," said the woman, putting the young trees on the ground.

"You're crazy, they'll never grow," jeered the boy.

"Not grow!" cried his mother indignantly. "Of course they'll grow. Mrs. Hearst grew her trees from seeds. And flowers—see," indicating some perennials, "I am going to have them all around the house."

"But, mother," expostulated the boy, "It would takes ages to make a garden here. As for trees, say, it would take those little sticks eight years to grow into decent trees."

"Well, and what if it would?" exclaimed the woman, impatiently. "Isn't this our land; don't we expect to stay here, you and your children and your children's children? Will they not enjoy the pretty garden, the bright flowers? When you are old, will not the shade of the trees be welcome on the hot days, when you sit and watch your sons bringing in the harvest; and your grandchildren play about the door-steps?"

Gabriel laughed. "Forget about my children and my children's children. I'm worrying about myself. I'm not going to stay here," he went on decidedly, "and I am certainly not going to fix up the place for someone else."

"Not going to stay here, not stay on the land we came so far to get, for which we gave up our bit of Belgium? You are mad. Your father's very soul is buried in this land."

"I tell you, I don't want the land," said the boy, surlily.

"You are like all the others, all the rest in this strange country. You have no sense of possession, no love of the land." Tears choked the woman's utterance. "What is it that you do want, if it is not land?" she cried fiercely. "Do you know?"

"I know all right. I want money."

The older woman sniffed her disdain. "Money, pah. For what would one want money if not to buy more land, to gather together an estate. You are a fool. You gather all the bad notions of your new country and none of the good ones." Angrily she stooped and, picking up two pails, turned away.

"Now you have made her cross again," said Marie. "Poor mother! Do help me plant these. It will make her happy. Why can't you settle down to the idea of farming. You would like it, now that father is not here to make your life a misery. You can have good horses." A flicker of interest showed in the boy's eyes. "It was Tom Canning who made you discontented."

"The whole family is going to California for the winter," said the boy sulkily.

"And I suppose that you think you should be traipsing off as well? In our own land we nearly starve. We have next to nothing. We come over here. All that is asked of us is that we till the land which is given us. We get a free education. They pay our mother more money in a month than our father ever earned before. We have hardships now, but we had them at home. These are different hardships, that is all—and because they are different you resent them fiercely. For all Canada has done for you, you betray her. You must go to the United States, or into the cities. Canada does not want

settlers in her cities. She wants them on the land. If the United States is so wonderful, why are her people coming over here by the hundred thousand? You could grow up and be a great land owner here; you go away to be a servant."

"Yes," sniffed Gabriel. "A great land owner without a crop, without enough food or clothes. All the years won't be like this. The farmers around here have dressed their children in potato sacking before now, and they will again. A great land owner who works fifteen hours a day."

"Just for a few months."

"And in the winter wishes he could, so lonely and white it is."

Gabriel was digging viciously, the broken earth flying in all directions. Paul sauntered up.

"Why don't you get after Paul?" the boy asked.

"I get home here about once every three weeks, for a few hours, and it is nothing but nag, nag, nag."

"Paul will never stay; you know that," said Marie, decidedly.

"There you are. Well, why should I stay?"

"Because mother wants it; because Paul knows what he is aiming at, you do not. All you want is change. To own, to possess, to keep for generations—you have no idea of that."

"What do I care about the next generation?" laughed Gabriel. "What does anyone in Canada?

Say, the Purdies on the next section have moved fourteen times in eight years."

"What does anyone in Canada," cried Marie, indignantly. "Why are the Canadians fighting in France, if it is not for the next generation."

"What is it all about," asked Paul. "And talk English. They will call you Bohunks if you don't."

"I was telling Gabriel that you boys should stay on the land. If you won't stay and work it, we shall lose it. Gabriel says that he is going to Calgary for the winter. He can't get work there. He will starve."

"Not I," said Gabriel, quickly. "That is up to the Children's Aid; I am not eighteen."

Marie threw him a look of disgust. Madame Fourchette came up carrying two pails of water to put in the trench. She was mollified now. It pleased her to see the three children working about the place.

"Some day, Paul, this will all be yours," she said. That would make Gabriel think!

"Thank you, mamma, I don't want it," laughed Paul, seeing through his mother's little scheme.

"I read in a book," threw in Marie, "That most of the great men in Canada came from farms."

"Left farms, you mean," flashed Paul, and the two boys roared with laughter.

"Tom Canning has some sense, now that he is older. He is content with the farm," said Madame Fourchette.

"He's not working on the farm," cried Gabriel.

"He just stays around a little. He is afraid that he will have to enlist if he doesn't stay where he is."

"Well, it is a tragedy, sure enough," said the mother, patting down the cold earth stiffly. "We come so far, just to give our sons all this."

"You can thank your stars you did come," said Gabriel.

They all sauntered back to the little house for an early supper. Gabriel and Marie had to be back at their places for milking.

"Why worry now," thought the older woman. The children had planted the little trees. The shade would be good in her old age. Perhaps her man would be back then, quiet and old, a comfort to have by her side. She inhaled deeply the wheaty breath of the prairie.

It was the day after Christmas that Marie went to Clovelly to see Annie. Madame Fourchette, urged on by Gabriel, had bought an old cutter and a set of single harness. The low sleigh was held together by bits of wire and here and there some binder twine, but it filled Madame Fourchette's heart with joy and pride. It never left the door without being crammed full. Marie bundled the three young children in the bottom and at the back. She and her mother sat on the seat. It was a cold, glittering day, the air like wine. The strong sun on the snow-covered prairie made it almost impossible to keep one's eyes open. The breath of the horse settled in white frost on every tiny hair about his nose.

A peace, unknown since she had met Grange, came over Marie. She looked down between the folds of her woollen muffler at the children, bundled up like fat pillows, and happily clutching the precious toys that Marie had bought for them, revelling in the thought of at last seeing Clovelly, that fairyland of which Marie had told them so many stories. Her mother sat beside her, proud of the heavy cloth coat that Marie had given her. This was her place. Her other dreams must be forgotten. To minister to her mother, so like a child, to the children, so dependent on her for those bright gleams which streak occasionally the drab lives of poor children, this was her task. A lump rose in her throat. She had thought so little of her own people when she had had Grange and her friends at Clovelly. To these people she had thought herself indispensable. She had left her world for theirs, and they did not need her, had no room for her. Only a rare letter did she receive from Mrs. Hearst, busy almost beyond her strength in war work. There had been nothing from Grange to break the long silence. She had left her own world for theirs, and now seemed to have a foothold in neither. For lonely months she had tried to build a solitary world for herself; a world of her books, her studies, her dreams, and no peace had come. Now she would go back wholly to her own people. There she would be needed.

Clovelly struck a chill to her heart and strengthened her resolve. Annie and her husband lived only in the

big kitchen, the breakfast room, and the little bedroom which had been Marie's. The rest of the house, through which Marie roamed, was ghastly with covered furniture, and bitterly cold. The little treasures, the books, had been packed away, and rugs rolled up. She was glad to step back into the warm kitchen. As the door clicked shut, she felt that that chapter of her life was closed.

She helped Annie dish up the dinner, glowing happily at the sniffing little wrinkled noses of the children when the turkey was put on the table, and was annoyed with herself for not having taught them the decent table manners that she had acquired.

Annie was delighted to see Marie. She had always joined in the great game of spoiling the beautiful girl. She chattered away volubly.

"Have you had Mrs. Hearst's letter?" Marie shook her head. "Well, it will be at Calgary when you get back," she said. "I received mine the day before yesterday and in it she said that she was writing you and sending you a little gift. And poor Mr. Grange, such a pity about him!"

"What about him?"

Marie tried to keep her voice steady. Her ears drummed. A shining mist seemed to come before her eyes. When it cleared away, she could note nothing but the join of the rose pattern on the brim of her plate. If that roaring would go out of her ears. And

then Annie's voice came back to her. She was talking of Grange to her mother.

"Poor soul, such a nice young man, but he's doing nicely now."

Then Grange was not dead!

Wave after wave of relief poured over the girl. He still lived. He did not love her, but she could still love him, perhaps see him again, hear his deep voice, watch his brown, slim hands. Her heart pounded. These waves that rushed over her, submerging her, she would be swamped in them. Was she fainting? She could see nothing again. She forced herself to speak, to listen.

"What do you say happened to him?"

"He was badly wounded in the head," said Annie. "But he's getting better. Poor soul, he will be in the hospital a long time yet."

Marie heard vaguely. Objects took shape again, and she saw once more the three red and shining faces of the children, busily stuffing themselves.

That night she put the children to bed for the last time for many a night. She told them stories, she petted them. Once more, in her heart, she dedicated herself to them. When Tom Canning came over later, she was gracious to him.

Marie returned to Calgary a day before her mistress. Although so eager to be entirely at one with her own family, she was honest enough to admit to herself that it was a relief to get away from the noise and untidiness.

Her mother's shrill voice rasped on her nerves, and one never had a minute alone. Mrs. Hearst's letter awaited her, and a gift, a pretty silk jumper.

"You will be sorry to hear that Grange was very severely wounded," she wrote. "Do write to the poor chap, you were always such friends, and I am afraid that he will have a very slow, hard convalescence. Thank heaven he is out of danger now. I stayed with his mother through the worst of it. It nearly killed her.

"George looks very important and handsome in his uniform. I can hardly believe that he is the same husband I had at Clovelly, who puttered about the garden, and out of whom we could always get a 'rise' in our arguments. I don't believe I would dare argue with him now.

"Constance Howard is over here. I have seen her several times. She is driving a motor ambulance. Lady Houltain had us all out for a week-end when Frank had leave. Do forgive me, dear, for not writing more frequently. I long to see you again. Are you and Gertrude happy together? I am sure you are. I wish that I could run in and see you on one of your cozy evenings. I hardly know the sweet child at all, but Allan and I always admire the same type of woman, so that I love her on the strength of that."

Marie wept a little over the letter. That world had spun so far out of the orbit of her own; such important people as they all were!

The first warm day of spring, Grange's letter came. A thick envelope sprawled across with his definite, strong writing. Gertrude Hearst had picked the letter up from the floor in the hall. Marie had long ceased to hope for one from Grange. Her mistress walked into the kitchen, the letter held between two fingers. She handed it to the girl with a quick little flick of her hand.

"A letter, Marie." Her lips closed tightly. Her eyebrows were slightly elevated. It was bad enough for mother Hearst to be always writing to the girl, almost as often as she wrote to herself, but Grange Houltain! Well, at the very least, it showed very poor taste to be writing to the servant of one's friend.

"Thank you," said Marie, and her face had gone white. She ran up to her room with it and slipped it into a drawer. It was too precious to be skimmed over now. She would not open it until her leisure time in the afternoon. At first she was not even happy about it, she was simply dazed. Twice she went to her room and, opening the drawer, looked at it. Yes, there it was, thick and grey and solid. Then, as the hours went on, a song stole back to her heart once more. Her beauty glowed. Grange was alive for her again, and vague memories of their love became vivid.

Sitting on the side of her bed, Marie read her letter eagerly, skimming over it, rushing on to what she thought it would contain. She read it again—had she missed something? Then slowly, carefully, anxious to

read between the lines, to put into it something of the warm love that filled herself. It was a completely impersonal letter. Now it lay in the girl's lap above her clasped hands. She was suddenly very tired. It was from a more thoughtful Grange than she had known, from a man no longer accepting the comfortable conclusions of life that his world gave him, but probing them.

"I remember how we talked the night of our first ride, do you, Marie? And I thought what a quaint little thing you were with your original ideas, and your insistence on the truth. When I knew you better, I was sometimes annoyed at the way you stripped off the comfortable platitudes and maxims beneath which I found shelter. Granted that they had dry rot, I used to think, at least, they were a shelter. Now I realize that until the rubbish is out of the way, we cannot build with true, strong boards. I hope that I have not bored you with my long dissertations on these subjects. You are the only one to whom I could write them; everyone else would think I was shell-shocked."

There were little bits of news, and, just at the last, "Will you forgive my long silence, little Marie, and write to me, 'please'?" Oh, that "please"! How often, after firm denial, she had raised her eager lips to his when he had said "Please". Had he thought of that? Surely; there were quotation marks around the word. That was her great solace—he had remem-

bered something of their past. Apparently he no longer wanted her kisses, but he did want her letters, her thoughts, her ideas. And he should have them. She would read and think and study. She was glad of the last well-spent year. She read the letter again, and was filled with a great happiness, that Grange had need of her. Then she read the last line again and wept.

CHAPTER III.

IN 1918 Alberta was still fairly prosperous. The wonderful crops of 1915 and 1916 were not repeated.

The farmers began to wonder why they had not put away some of their money, but once more they were staking everything on wheat and cattle. In a few communities the dairying business was growing and certain brands of butter were becoming known throughout the country—and winning prizes at all the big fall fairs. The coal mines, worked by foreigners, were having labor troubles and were struggling against the high cost of carrying on the railroads—and so were unable to compete with the mines in the United States. These mines were struggling desperately, in their turn, to meet the supply demanded by Eastern Canada. Wages were high, prices were high, taxes were high. The country was like a balloon, puffed up with a false prosperity. A pin prick would burst it.

The world had been in eruption for four years, and then the Armistice was signed. There were still seethings and small conflagrations here and there, while men looked about on the arid lava-covered land of post-war days. In a daze, the knowledge filtered into their brains that no longer does war bring spoils to the victor. Peace made her biggest bid for popularity

when she talked to men of dollars, instead of good-will.

Alberta suffered with the rest of the world. Europe needed wheat, but had no money to pay for it. Cattle were shipped to Chicago—and sold for less than they had cost in Alberta. Cattle kings lost fortunes overnight. Then the American Government threw up a tariff wall, cutting off the market entirely. She had to protect her own farmers, who were sorely pressed. Britain had an insurmountable wall, calling it "Foot and Mouth Disease". Cattle multiplied on the plains and there was no market for them. Steers sold in Calgary for less money than a well-bred rooster. The miners, released from the fear of internment, followed the dictates of their union masters in the United States, and put on strike after strike. Nobody was cheerful but the uplifter and the bootlegger. Even the booster was not heard in the land.

The people at Clovelly were hard pressed. Annie's husband was not the farmer Frank Hearst had been—and much money had gone into the battalion. Mr. Hearst was anxious to get home to take on his parliamentary duties again. He believed that the provinces' only hope was a farmers' party. Mrs. Hearst, for once, was not in sympathy with her husband's aim.

"The only way that the farmers can be helped is by the expenditure of money, which means taxing the cities, to give to one class in the community. At any rate, why not a plumbers' party in power, or any other group?"

"But I tell you, the farmers won't pull through if they don't get help," spluttered her husband, impatiently.

"Neither will many in the cities."

"We may combine with the Labour Party."

"An unnatural union—the world's real capitalists and labour. What if they insist on an eight-hour day for your hired man?"

"I'll get things started, then Frank must step up and take my place."

"He won't," said his wife definitely.

"Why not?"

"Because he sees things as they are, a curse in this age and generation."

"Then Allan will," replied George Hearst with conviction.

His wife laughed. "It sounds like an English countess standing for a labour seat," she said. "Yes, Allan will. He will be able to talk to the constituents with conviction, because he sees only one side of a question—and that is the side that pays him best. Moreover, he is not at all clever. That is a great asset in a Canadian politician. Canada, almost as much as the United States, dislikes brains in her statesmen. That is democracy—the Rule of the Mediocre."

"Now we are not going to get started on that," cried her husband, hand upraised in warning. "But we must get back to Clovelly on the first boat possible."

Madame Fourchette did not feel the hard times. Her home was comfortable. The parlour had an oil-cloth rug, two rocking chairs and a phonograph. This latter had been bought on the instalment plan. The first few weeks it was in the house, it ground out their three records unceasingly. Two pieces in Hebrew dialect, Tipperary and Mah Ba-a-aby, Home Sweet Home and the Holy City. When the Inspector of the Children's Aid came to the house and heard the machine, Madame Fourchette glanced out of the window just in time to see the woman's face harden into shocked indignation. Sixty dollars a month, and such a fuss if one did not spend it sensibly. Like slaves, they were, enough to give one black thoughts.

"The Holy City," she cried in a stage whisper. She pulled off her new sweater and crammed it in a drawer, snatched an orange from one of the children and hid it in the cupboard, rolled over a little stocking to hide the holes in the knee, and then assumed a melancholy look as she opened the door to her guest.

"Bébe," she cried. "Stop the music." After she had asked the usual questions, heard the usual complaints, her inquisitor said coldly, "I see you have been investing in a phonograph, Madame Fourchette. Considering the great strain it is upon us all to provide——" But she got no further. Madame Fourchette loosed the flood gates of her speech, a torrent of broken English. Gabriel and Marie, such blessings, a gift to their poor mother, whose heart was breaking in

a strange land. "The Holy City—" she rolled her eyes "—ah, one could see the very angels, the blessed Mother herself. Paul, the other side."

In pantomime she turned over the record and wound the crank, but Paul was too slow and she jerked him away, winding it up herself. High and nasal, "Home Sweet Home" beat out. Madame Fourchette sat down on the corner of her chair. She sniffed into the corner of her apron. "La Belgique, La Belgique," she murmured. Tears sprang into the Inspector's eyes. She grasped Madame Fourchette's hand—and left without another word. The next week, this same inspector delivered an address before the "Girl's Union" on the power of music, and illustrated her points by telling the story of Madame Fourchette. A fund was started to provide records for the poor people who owned phonographs.

As the door closed on the woman, Madame Fourchette shook her fist after her. "Old cat, you'll mind your own business, prying into my affairs. I'll buy what I like. Coming here with all your stories of my Adele. You will drive the girl crazy. And now you must operate on her nose. What's wrong with her nose, I would like to know? I know you, cutting up my poor children, so that you and the doctor can get money out of the Government. It is a plot." The poor woman's hatred and fear of these people was almost a mania.

But the Belgian woman's grasping at little things was but the feeble protest against losing the thing that was greatly desired. Gabriel and Paul would not work the one hundred and sixty acres. The poor woman had had her neighbour farm it on shares, but the crop was not good. Now she tried to sell it, and no one would buy. Weeds grew rank on the ploughed lands, thriving under eighteen hours of sun a day. The weed inspector became another figure to fear. She looked at the wire fence, supported by slender poles, which enclosed the land that no one wanted and, in a frenzy, she shook the wires until they moaned their inutility.

Her man, he could have done something. He became a hero and she wanted him. She needed him. There was Canning, another person to fear. Two evenings had he come and he would come again, and then Mrs. Canning would become cross and she would fear her, her friend. Gabriel would go away and Paul. Those good women would drive Adele to her ruin. Marie was not of her world, nor did she love the girl. A strange land, where one gained and lost so quickly. She would like to see her old home now, with its path and the tree by the road, with the doorstep worn and grooved by the footsteps of generations of Fourchettes. Her home, where one slept with the little ones so close that you could hear them breathing, and the cows so near one could hear them moving, and the fowl came into one's house like good friends. Her home, where

her man, weary with the day's toil, had slept the sleep of heavy satisfaction close by her side.

People said that the home would be gone now. The poor woman could not believe that. She pictured to herself the soldiers swarming over the land, circling about her place, passing on. But her home, it must be just the same—smiling contentedly in the sun. There had been too many children, too little food over there—but one never thought, never hoped, was never disappointed. She moved heavily into the house again.

The Armistice brought change to Marie also. Gertrude Hearst resolved to go to England for a holiday, while her husband was still there. Marie must look for a new place. She dreaded change of any kind. Life had gone along very smoothly for Marie since Grange's first letter had come. She read, she studied, she knitted, and made little garments for her brothers and sisters from clothes Gertrude Hearst gave her. Grange's letters came regularly, about one in every two weeks. Occasionally little glimpses of the old Grange smiled through them, allusions to times that they had had together. He was homesick for Alberta and the fact astonished him. Like all the west's adopted sons, he would write, "What is there about it that gets one? I could never live over here again."

Marie was sure that his love for her was dead. Evidently, once back in England among his own

people, the folly of his connection with the little Belgian immigrant had struck him. Sometimes, Marie wondered if she had obeyed her desires and had given herself to him their last night, would it have made a difference, bound her to him more closely. And if she had known that, would she have acted as she did. Instinctively, she knew that she would have. She, who had so little, whose birth and position gave her nothing, realized to the full her own value, which was all within herself. Her beauty, her keen mind, above all, her dignity, purity—call it what you will—these were all she had. These she guarded jealously. She would hold them lightly for no man, not even her beloved.

Marie secured a new place. Tom Canning had been in the city nearly a year. He owned a big car, which he used as a taxi. He would be very attentive for a few weeks, then drop out of her life entirely. Marie felt that she bored him, for they had absolutely nothing in common. She cared for none of the things which he considered delightful—love-making, movie shows, drinking. But after a few weeks with his boon companions, Tom always came back to Marie. It seemed as if he could not keep away.

One night early in the spring, after she was established in her new place, he telephoned her. Gabriel was in the Holy Cross Hospital. His appendix had burst while working at the Canning's place. The boy

was very ill. Tom would come right out with the car and get Marie. Marie went to her mistress.

"But you can't go to-night!" exclaimed the woman. "We are going out. Who will stay with the children?"

"I am so sorry, madame," said Marie, in distress. "My brother is very ill. I must go."

"If you go now, you don't come back," blazed the woman, her fat face purpling.

"Very well, madame, but I must go. He is asking for me."

"Of all the ungrateful creatures! After me taking you into my home."

"Not at all, madame. It was purely a business arrangement, and I have given you satisfaction."

Marie left the room to pack her small bag. She heard her mistress say, "Jack, did you ever hear of such a thing?"

"But, my dear, you are unreasonable. If your brother were sick——"

"That is all nonsense. You know how that class of people always get in such a stew over so little."

"You're getting in a stew over very little yourself," cried her husband sharply. "And you have lost a good maid whom you will not replace easily."

"Of course, stick up for her because she is pretty."

"Thank heaven I am leaving this place," thought Marie fervently. "That vulgar woman!" Then, with a sob, "Oh, Gabriel, Gabriel. It will kill mother."

That long, long night. Tom hovering near, ill at ease, restless. The smell of the hospital, the wan faces of patients as Marie tiptoed down the long ward. Gabriel's eyes, wide with fear and suffering, as they prepared him for the operating room. That tight, breathless feeling that buoyed one up. White nurses, white beds, white lights. The soft swish of the elevator which whisked her brother from her—to what? Nervously, every toe and finger moving, Marie sat in the long, dim hall and counted her beads. She could not concentrate. Would the Good Mother understand. "Holy Mary, Holy Mary, Holy Mary," she breathed swiftly and desperately, then commenced again in despair. Her mind flew to pictures of funerals, her mother, of flowers in the little shack. It would be cold, so cold, the long muddy roads.

"Oh," she moaned to herself. "I shall make it true by thinking it." She bit her dry lips and started again. "Holy Mary, Holy Mary." She swayed back and forth in her chair.

The elevator came down and Marie picked up the stitches of life again. She followed the little four-wheeled bed, but no one paid any attention to her. That white form, so still, what did it mean? Timidly she touched the nurse's arm, and the nurse, cool, efficient, nodded reassuringly. Noting the girl's beauty, she smiled suddenly and her lips formed the word, "Fine".

The cold dawn was showing when Tom and Marie stepped out of the hospital. Marie shivered.

"Back to the house, Marie?"

"Tom, I had forgotten. I can't go back. Mrs. Finlayson was angry at my leaving. Take me to the Girl's Club."

Tom tucked the big rug about her.

"You have been so good, Tom," cried Marie impulsively.

"It is when you are in trouble that you find out who your real friends are," he said, settling himself at the wheel. He drew on his heavy gloves, then slowly leaned over and drew the girl to him, kissing her mouth. She gripped her hands to control her shuddering, but she did not protest. What was the use? There were so many bigger things to worry about than Tom's kisses.

Tom and Marie had breakfast and then went to the Club. It was a big red brick building that should have been attractive and was not, like a girl who has just missed beauty. It just missed so many things, Marie learned in the course of the next few weeks. It had a tennis court which was lumpy, and the net in a chronic state of disrepair. It had a swimming pool in the basement which was muggy, the half cold water chilling but not refreshing, and the dressing rooms lacked proper facilities for drying one's bathing suits or hair. The bedrooms were small but neat. They boasted two single beds, two dressers and two

chairs, but the curtains were ugly, the carpets flat and half worn. The bathrooms had the same damp, muggy feel of the swimming pool. They were dark and one watched one's opportunity to get a bath. Always there were half leaky taps, an inadequate supply of the small bath towels and a lack of hot water.

In the dining-room, the girls sat at long tables decorated with plates of soda crackers. The food was fairly good had it not been ruined in the cooking. Such a luxury as an egg for breakfast had to be supplied by the girls themselves. Of the people in charge, there seemed to be a sufficient number to manage a large and busy hotel. The whole building gave evidence of defective plumbing and the ugly water stains on all the walls gave one a feeling of depression and unhealthiness.

For the doubtful blessing of living at this place and sharing a room with another girl, the girls paid the sum of six dollars a week, although the regular rate for transients was eight dollars a week. The girls had to conform to certain rules and do up their rooms themselves.

Marie always looked back on these days with a shudder. The women in charge regarded the girl with suspicion at first. Very peculiar that she had lost her position so suddenly. They had taken the trouble to telephone her late mistress and found that she had left about eight o'clock the night before her arrival at the Club. On questioning Marie, they

learned that she had been at the hospital all night; that was most unusual. They pursed their lips. Further inquiry elicited the fact that Tom, although owning a large motor, used it as a taxi. Moreover, he was a neighbour; and his mother and Madame Fourchette were good friends. Immediately, these good women exhibited more warmth and sympathy towards Marie. They nodded and said they understood. Marie knew that they did not understand but would not discuss the situation. She hated the indignity of all this questioning, and the knowledge that she was staying at the place at cheap rates through their kindness, rankled.

Marie's mother came in that day. She had left the small children with Paul. She had endless bundles with her, but had forgotten her woollen muffler, and Marie, fearfully counting the pennies, had to buy her a new one. The poor woman had fully intended staying at the Club with Marie until Gabriel was out of the hospital. Oh, that hospital and that doctor. She knew it had not been necessary to operate. It was a plot, to get money at the risk of her child's life. Never had Gabriel complained of a pain, never! She talked incessantly to Marie, to the doctor and to the nurses, complaining and whimpering, almost begging. She confided to the woman in charge of the desk at the Club that Marie was going to marry Tom Canning. Marie was good, not like Adele. Tom Canning was described as possessing every virtue and not a fault.

"You must go back to the country, mother," said Marie, at the end of the third day, unable to stand it any longer. "The children need you. We cannot afford to stay here."

"Afford! Can't afford to see my own child and him at death's door. The Government must pay."

"Oh, mother," cried the girl, wearily. "You talk as if the Government were a fairy prince. It will not pay for this. And here am I, out of work. There is no use seeking a new position while Gabriel keeps asking for me all the time. I cannot help you. I can barely pay my board for the next week or so, and there will be all the expense of Gabriel's hospital bills and the doctor's bills."

"Fool, what expense for Gabriel?" said her mother, testily. "How could he pay?"

"He must have several hundred dollars now," said Marie. "He has given you none of his wages since father left."

"That is for him to go to California with." Sitting on the edge of Marie's little bed, Madame Fourchette began peeling a banana. She was enjoying these few days in town, except for the fact of Gabriel's illness. But he would be better now. She never came into the Club without a parcel—oranges, bananas or a small bag of candy.

"He is going to go as soon as he is better," she continued. "And when he gets the money he is going

to send for the children and me," she finished, complacently.

"Poor Gabriel," sighed Marie. She was alarmed for him. His temperature had shot up again, and he was in pain. "It will be a long time before he is well enough to travel, and he will have to pay what he can towards the cost of his illness."

"He'll not pay a cent."

"Mamma, he must."

"He must not," the older woman blazed at Marie. "For what would you have him pay? How do these people know that he has the money? He is not eighteen yet. They cannot take a cent from him. The Children's Aid will have to pay for this. Now mind, don't you open your mouth. Gabriel's money stays where it is."

"It is not fair, mamma. Someone has to pay—the taxpayers."

"Pah, you and your talk. Taxpayers! You be a good girl to your mamma and your poor brother who nearly died, and stop your talk of paying. And you please those ladies downstairs. I notice your fine airs with them, and that mouth you keep so tightly shut. They don't like it. They know all about us, because they work with the Children's Aid and you must be pleasant with them. You will get us in trouble yet, and we'll all be starving. Look at Adele. They talk of putting her in that home like a jail again. I tell them, 'No', and that you will marry and live here and

keep her with you, and so they say they will give her another chance. If you are not careful, they will think, 'that girl is so fine, such airs that family has,' and they will make Gabriel pay. I tell you, you do as they advise, they are good, they know the troubles young girls get into in a city. They want you to get married, and then they will leave us alone and stop their snooping."

"Adele is all right," Marie cried indignantly. "If only all of you could understand her. She cannot stand the loneliness of domestic work as I can. I love it; but not Adele. She should work some place else, in a factory or in a store."

"That is what I said, but they all say, 'No', she is too pretty, she would be exposed to too many dangers. She ran away from the last house she was at, and they found her a new place. This is her last chance. She is silly, like you. She will not talk up to the Inspectors."

"Why did she run away?"

"Because the man of the house, he kissed her."

"Then she showed her good sense by running away," cried Marie, indignantly. "What did they expect after that; that she would stay?"

"But that was not the trouble," wailed her mother, "She shows no sense when she talks to those ladies. She laughs at them. They asked her why she did not go straight to them, and was she afraid to stay in the house, and Adele answered with a laugh, 'Afraid! Of

him? Lord, no! But he was short and fat. I like them big.' "

"That was Adele's nonsense," said Marie.

"Oh, I know," rejoined her mother impatiently. "But don't you see that those ladies wanted her to say that she *was* afraid."

"Mother," Marie started a new subject, as she picked up the banana skin her mother had thrown on the dresser and carefully wrapped it in paper before putting it in the waste basket, "why are you telling everyone that I am going to marry Tom Canning?"

"Because you are."

"Mother!"

"You are—to save Gabriel, to save Adele, why not? Tom is a fine boy. He is making money; he is getting rich. His mother is my friend."

"I can't help it, mother. I can't marry Tom."

"Has he asked you?"

"Yes, often."

"Then you marry him. How can Paul go on at school, if you don't marry Tom and have Paul live with you? He is nearly through school in the country. All your fine friends have left you. They say that Frank Hearst is to be married and live at Clovelly, and Mr. and Mrs. Hearst are not coming back. They will live in England. You will never work there again, so you must forget those fine times and come back to your own people. Tom has put up with a great deal."

"Well, we shall talk about it later," said the girl. "Let us go down for dinner. Will you go home in the morning?"

"If you will promise to be a good girl and do as I want you to."

The following morning Marie received word that Grange would arrive at Calgary that night. The telegram was handed to her as she came in from seeing her mother off on the train. As she read the single line, at first her brain refused to grasp its import, then, like a great light, it dawned on her what all this might mean. She groped her way upstairs.

Thank heaven her mother had gone and her roommate was at work. She would be alone. In her room she read the message again. "Arriving tonight 8:10. Meet me, please." The old Grange, a warmth in the short line, to be sure. Throwing herself on the bed, she gave herself up to dreams. Grange, that very night. Oh, for a horse, and the wide prairie, and the sunset. Her hand clasped her white throat that felt his kisses. She jumped up and gazed in the little mirror, exulting in her beauty, for she was lovelier than ever. Her perfect skin, her straight features, her rose-coloured mouth, with its crooked little smile that showed her white teeth and her dimples, her deep blue eyes over which the thick, fringed lids hung heavy with love. Her slim body, with gracious curves, revealing its maturity. She thought of herself four years before, of her slight knowledge, when she was

just groping with hesitant steps into the world of books.

She shook out her little purse and carefully counted her money. She would risk it. Surely that much she could selfishly take for herself. She sped down town and bought linen collars and cuffs for the smart little suit Gertrude Hearst had given her. Inaction now was impossible to her. She had her hair bobbed and bought a little black hat, not trusting the girl to send it up, lest it should not arrive in time.

In the afternoon she went to Gabriel. The nurses had an unfavorable report. Marie telephoned the doctor and he spoke of the possibility of another operation, for things were not well with the boy and he should not be suffering such pain. As she stood by Gabriel's bed, she chided herself for being so heartless as to think of happiness. He was racked with agony and despondent. Big tears gathered under the boy's winking lids and insisted in trickling from the corners of his eyes, despite his efforts to control them.

"Another operation," he gasped.

"Oh, no," Marie cried, in dismay. "Perhaps not. The doctor is not sure."

Gabriel nodded emphatically, tears welling up to choke him. "It is a hundred dollars every time they operate," he whispered, dragging her down to him by her hand. "Don't tell them of my money. If I can't get to California, I would rather die. I will never work on a farm again. They can't take my

money from me; the Children's Aid has to look after us until we are eighteen."

"I won't tell, dear."

Marie knelt beside the boy and they wept together. Could she leave him alone all evening, her brother, who was perhaps dying? Joy could never be unalloyed. The boy dozed fitfully, and Marie thought of her cuffs, of her little hat, of how well she would look in Grange's eyes. She heard his voice in greeting—he was so tall, so straight, so handsome—oh, above all, so beloved. The cold years were as nothing. The palms of her hands tingled almost unbearably as she thought of him. Then the suffering boy stirred, his eyes widening with fear of the pain that began to creep on him again.

"Marie," he pleaded, "stay, stay," and tossed his hot head in agony.

The nurse stole up and out again. Marie knelt down. The doctor, one of the Sisters and another doctor came.

"We are operating immediately," they told her.

Once more she sat in the dim hall and told her beads. The clock struck eight. Fascinated, she watched the big hand jump the minutes, so fast when she thought of Grange, so slow when she thought of Gabriel. Her mother should have been here; she had sent her away. People passed her crouched in her chair, some smiling, some creeping by, dazed by life's great reality, death. A nurse nodded over her

shoulder at a house surgeon, and he went back and whispered to her. They both laughed lightly and his hand lingered on her arm as they parted. "How could they," thought Marie. "All day fighting suffering and death, how could they find the heart for loving."

The elevator descended, and once more Marie joined the little procession, tiptoeing along to the ward. She might stay all night, the nurse told her, if she would be very still. She watched her brother struggle up to consciousness and agony. Oh, if she could bear it for him, could make it easier! Poor Gabriel! He had been such a splendid boy until recently, and now, facing manhood, he showed nothing but bitterness and discontent. Perhaps California would give him his chance.

White-faced, weary beyond thinking or feeling, Marie reached the Club in the cold light and found her mother huddled up in a chair in the dim reception room.

"Why, mother, however did you get here?"

"Tom 'phoned to the Club and they told him that you were with Gabriel and of how sick my boy was. He motored out for me. Ah, Marie, there is a man, so good to us all. The ladies here, they say: 'Mrs. Fourchette, don't worry, Marie will marry that fine young man and you will be all right. You will have a home for Adele and Paul.'"

"You knew Gabriel had had another operation?" queried Marie, quickly.

Her mother nodded.

"We stopped at the hospital and they would not let me go to my boy. Oh, it is a plot; I know these people. I will take him home with me, not again will I go without him."

"Let us go to my room," said Marie. "I am so tired."

They tiptoed upstairs. The house was scarcely awake yet, and Marie's room-mate lay curled up in her bed, her bobbed hair sticking up above the bedclothes like a Zulu's. She looked up at the intruders, started to stretch, then grunted and rolled over again into a heavy sleep.

"Lie down, mother," whispered Marie.

"No, you must," protested the woman. "I am not tired. You look so white and weary."

Marie shivered. On her bed lay the big yellow bag containing her new hat. She slipped it underneath.

"What is that?" asked her mother quickly. "Not a new hat, Marie, and we so poor that I cannot stay near my sick son?"

Marie nodded dumbly. Her hands were busy with the hooks of her skirt. "I will take it back, mother," she promised.

The woman began tucking the heavy quilt about the girl.

"I had a long talk with Tom Canning coming in.

It is all settled. You can keep the hat for your trousseau."

Oh, Tom! What did she care; just let her sleep, thought the exhausted girl. Her mother's thick, black figure settled in the chair against the grey window. They had given Gabriel morphine and he would not be suffering. Grange—he was near. She moved her shoulders. His arms would be about her again, so soon. She sank into a deep, heavy sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

MARIE was awakened by her mother entering the room. The pale amber sun shone high through the dusty windows, throwing into light the faded, worn aspect of the room, as only an early spring sun can. The girl looked about her. The other bed was empty and made up.

"What time is it?" she asked her mother. "Have I slept long?"

"Long enough to give you pink cheeks again," said the older woman, going to the dresser and starting to let down her heavy rope of greying hair. "You look just like I did when I was young, all except your eyes, your blue eyes."

Marie was alert again. When she heard this greatest of all motherly compliments, it often spelt trouble, a new sacrifice demanded.

"You didn't tell me what time it is. Where have you been?"

"It is just twelve o'clock. Such a sleep as you have had. I have been down talking to the lady at the desk, a very kind lady. I went down to telephone about Gabriel, who is a little better. We can't see him until two o'clock. The lady asked me all about

the poor boy. She tried to find out if we could pay anything for him for his sickness."

"What did you say?"

"I said that we were nearly starving, and that Adele spent all her money on herself. I told them that I only had my pension to keep us all. I said that Gabriel's wages had been small, and that we have had to use them to make a payment on our land."

Marie was busy making a hurried toilet. She wanted to finish before her mother and go to the telephone. However, she paused to say—

"Did you make a payment?"

"Why would we make a payment, with thirty-five years to pay and no one to till the land?"

"Oh, mother, I wish you wouldn't."

"Wouldn't what?"

"Oh, everything!"

"There it is! You find fault, but you do nothing yourself. The lady was so kind. She said that they were all trying to help us, but that we must try and help ourselves as well. When you marry Tom, they will let Adele live with you and work in a store. She thought that Paul should go to work and I told her that he would live with you and be no expense at all."

"They will find out about Gabriel's money," warned Marie.

"Not they, if we keep humble before them and do the things they want us to do. It is when we act for ourselves that they begin snooping."

Marie hurried out. She felt that her mother's constant references to her marriage with Tom were making the event a certainty. She must get to Grange, see him, become aware of him as a reality. No one was at the desk. The clatter of dishes and cutlery from the dining-room told Marie that no one would be there for many minutes. A girl was chatting vivacious nothings at the telephone and in vain Marie waited for her to finish. Madame Fourchette descended the stairs and they went into the dining room. Marie paused at the staff's table.

"Was there a telephone call for me, Miss Wilson?"

Miss Wilson drew herself up. "Was there a note on the board to that effect, Marie?"

"No, Miss Wilson, but I wondered——"

"Then why disturb us at our luncheon, dear," Miss Wilson rebuked. She could "dear" one very coldly.

Marie flushed and followed her mother.

"There was a man who called and asked for Marie," volunteered the physical director. "A stunning officer. You were in seeing about the laundry check at the time. I thought that the girl was still at the hospital. I didn't like to interfere just now——"

"Quite right. If the girls all began pestering us at our meals, what rest *would* we have from them. An officer, you say?" She looked significantly at the secretary. "That is our next problem," she said, with stern lips. "Protecting our girls from these returned soldiers."

"This one drove up in a huge motor," added the physical director.

There were wise noddings.

"And handsome, you say?"

"As handsome as Marie is beautiful," answered the young woman. "No more can be said than that."

"You see?"

Heads bobbed convictingly.

"Oh, but this man is ever so nice."

"Too nice, perhaps," smiled the facetious member of the staff. "Marie has this young Tom Canning. She will do well to stick to him; in fact, it is the only solution of their problems. That terrible old mother talked to me for an hour this morning, asking me to use my powers of persuasion with Marie. She seems to think that when some wealthy ranchers come back from England and settle near them again, Marie may land herself into trouble. Then there is that Adele one. She is a terror. We'll have trouble with her before we are finished if Marie doesn't marry and take her off our hands. The Children's Aid are at their wits' end about her."

Before Madame Fourchette and her daughter had finished dinner, they were called to the hospital. Gabriel hovered between life and death. About five o'clock Tom Canning called at the hospital and took them for a short drive, then to a restaurant for dinner. Marie begged to be taken home, but she was overruled by her mother who, despite her anxiety for her

son, took a childlike pleasure in these little treats. After dinner they went back to the hospital. More long hours of waiting in dim corridors, with a clock that ticked with such insistent loudness. Mother and daughter scarcely spoke to each other. Madame Fourchette sat crouched over, her feet on the rung of the chair. Her small head would nod and jerk as sleep overcame her. Her heavy body dragged with weariness. A nurse would tiptoe past and the watchers would be alert again, longing to know, dreading to hear, how the patient fared. But the nurse would pass on, and feverishly whispering over their beads they would slip into weariness again. At length the nurse came, their nurse. The boy was holding his own and there was no use waiting any longer. They would telephone from the hospital if there was any change. Home and to sleep again—the heavy, drug-like sleep of utter weariness, body and soul.

Noon and the sun again. Marie stirred and, in a flash, was awake. What crazy dream was this in which she was entangled? Grange was here, in the city, waiting for her, and she had not seen him. Why had he not telephoned? Back flooded the old doubts. He no longer loved her. She had been sure of that until he had sent the telegram. He had wanted her to meet him, and she had let her love for him read into the message more than was there; he might only have been bringing to her messages from Mrs. Hearst. But she must see him to-day.

"Mother," she shook the tired woman gently by the shoulder. "I think the luncheon bell has gone. We must hurry."

The woman turned heavily and blinked. "Gabriel?"

"There has been no message. He must be improving."

The woman rose, sat slumped over the edge of the bed and yawned. She looked dishevelled and Marie felt that disgust of her people which invariably assailed her when her thoughts were of her Clovelly friends or Grange.

"I am going to have a bath. Won't you have one, too, mother? You will feel fresher."

"Bath? No!"

"You should have taken off your waist. It is all crumpled."

"Too tired."

The woman stretched her coarse body and yawned. Marie fled to the bathroom.

Marie dressed for Grange. She must seize her first opportunity to see him. Her mother protested at the donning of the new hat, but was unstinted in her praise of the girl's beauty when she had finished her toilet. Tom called for them immediately after lunch and took them for a drive. Apparently Madame Fourchette made all these arrangements. She had been asked to tell Marie of her caller and her mind had jumped to Frank Hearst. She had warned Tom and they contrived to keep Marie under their watchful

eyes. Tom, to Marie's annoyance, assumed an air of proprietorship with her, for which she blamed her quiet acceptance of his kiss that first morning of Gabriel's illness. But why make a fuss and get her mother excited? Just let Gabriel get better and let her see Grange. Her mind seemed to be incapable of thinking of anything else.

Gabriel, when they called at the hospital, was showing a decided improvement. He would, in all probability, recover. He was conscious and asking for them. They tiptoed in and sat by the boy's bed until visiting hours were over, then Tom called and took them back to the Club for dinner.

Marie scarcely ate anything. When her mother attacked her second dessert, she excused herself and sped to her room. This was her only chance. Putting the last light touches to her toilet, she slipped on her hat and coat and hurried from the building as stealthily as an escaped criminal.

The cold spring air was sweet with budding leaves. The call of the children, at marbles and skipping, was heard with that clear insistence of new sounds. The last sunset clouds extended in dim bars across the western sky. Marie hurried. At the steps of the Palliser Hotel she hesitated, her heart thumping. Her eyes shone like stars. Perhaps in a moment she would be face to face with Grange. The thought sent the blood coursing through her body, weakening her in its flood.

"Is Mr. Houltain registered?" Her voice trembled. The luxurious fittings of the hotel awed her. What should she say or do?

The clerk nodded. "Would you like to telephone to his room, just around at the other side." He indicated the telephone desk.

"Mr. Houltain?" she tremulously asked the girl.

"Yes, will you take the second booth, please. Hello, yes—there you are." The phone sputtered, then a woman's voice—

"Yes?"

Marie was speechless. Then again—

"Yes? Are you there?"

"Meester Houltain, I would speak with him." Oh, where was her fluent English. Scarcely could she find the words.

"Oh, I am so sorry. He has just gone out. Is it one of his Calgary friends?"

"Yes, Madame. I would like so much to see him."

"He will be back in a few minutes. Would you care to come up and wait? This is his mother speaking. We are expecting Miss Howard on the train this evening, and Grange has gone over to meet her. The train is due now."

"Thank you, no. I shall call again."

The girl stumbled blindly from the booth, wondering how she could get to the door. She walked in a yellow blur of light and felt that the revolving doors tossed her into utter darkness. The air revived her.

She could not go home without seeing Grange, could not go back to her mother, to Tom, more hateful now, in his new prosperity than in his rural poverty. She turned her footsteps towards the station. She would torture herself by watching him greet Constance Howard, then she would be cured of this long madness. Ah, if Constance Howard had been in Calgary, *she* would have been the one to receive Grange's telegram about the day of his arrival. Marie was just to fill in time.

The train pulled in, and that stir went through the station which tells of the arrival of a train which has travelled far. Marie gripped the iron bars that separated her from the platform, and gazed through them like a pitiful caged animal.

Dear God, there he was—so brown, so tall. A moment; Constance Howard, more beautiful than ever, stood poised upon the top step of the car. Grange's eager hands went up. They stood, their hands clasping each other's arms. Marie saw his smile of welcome, the girl's face aglow with pleasure. They turned. Now they would pass her. She half longed to be seen, at least to hear Grange's voice. But no, of course not. They walked towards the side door of the hotel. Grange clasped the girl's arm closely, his head was bent eagerly to her, and her glowing face was uplifted to his. The crowd was thinning. The Travellers' Aid from the Club was eyeing her suspiciously from under her black sailor

hat. Marie turned with drooping shoulders and went out.

Oh, to be alone, to be alone for an hour. But where? When she returned to the Club, her mother was sitting in the reception room with Tom. Several young men were waiting to take girls to a show or to a dance.

"Wherever have you been?" asked her mother, sibilantly, toned down to whisperings by the silent strangers. "I have looked all about for you. Tom is going to take you for a drive, but I am tired. I go to bed to-night. Gabriel is well; he is sleeping, the Good Mother be praised."

Tom stood up.

"I am sorry, Tom. I know it is good of you, but I am too tired also," said Marie.

Motor with Tom, after all she had endured; after dreams had shattered, love been lost, life made grey? Oh, for solitude to fight it all out, to force upon her will this great renunciation of all hope.

"It won't tire you motoring, will it?" Madame Fourchette began to shrill.

She would get excited and say things, thought Marie.

"Please, Tom! I am so tired."

Her lovely eyes beseeched the man, but he pursed his lips.

"I say to you, Marie——" broke in her mother.

"To-morrow night, Tom," said Marie, hurriedly. "If Gabriel is better." She smiled at him sweetly and held out her hand. He pressed it lightly and she made no effort of withdrawal. Never before had he been so encouraged. He could afford to be generous.

"All right, Marie, to-morrow night then. I have a new bus—a bird."

Marie hurried to her room, glad that her mother did not share it. Her room-mate sat on the bed, trimming her new spring hat. Ribbons and flowers were strewn about. She and another girl were discussing the length of the streamers that were to hang down the side. Marie was called into consultation. She wanted to tell the girl to leave the hideous things off altogether, but dreaded the new flood of argument that would pour forth.

"Have it nearly to your waist," she advised.

She knew that a girl with such frowzy hair would like streamers, the longer the better. Her suggestion met with approval. She crawled into bed and turned her face to the wall. Oh, for the solace of tears and solitude!

Marie awoke in the morning with her mind made up. If Grange did not telephone her that day, she would consent, that night, to marry Tom. Life would hold nothing for her anyway, and by sacrificing herself to Tom, she would win the approval of all these busy people who interested themselves so much in her and her family, and on whose good will her mother so

greatly relied. She would fill them with a confidence in the Fourchettes' desire to help themselves, to become established, and in their pleasure at her marrying Tom, of whom they heartily approved, they might perhaps forbear investigating Gabriel's finances. Moreover, she would be the salvation of Adele, who, if kept at domestic work, would soon be guilty of all which these women now charged her. Greatest of all, her Paul would get his schooling. Paul, the only one in the family who had ambition. Marie was weary of dreaming, of hoping, of loving. She was weary of Tom's eternal proposals and her mother's constant nagging. Who was she that joy should come to her, that she should expect it? She had been in heaven at Clovelly and everything since then had been unhappiness. She had an insane father, an ignorant mother—there was no escape from her class.

The following day Tom drove Marie and her mother home. Gabriel showed a decided improvement, and they could no longer afford to stay at the Club. The coming marriage was announced to the staff, who beamed their approval. They had been worried about Marie being at the station, and now they could almost wash their hands of the whole family. Their solicitous send-off, and back-pattings, Marie rightly interpreted as "good riddance". After her marriage she would be entirely independent of them all. That, at least, was some comfort. Tom whispered mysteriously of coming wealth and displayed little desire for love-making.

He had to hurry back from the farm to make a business trip. He would come again in three weeks for the marriage.

CHAPTER V.

MARIE refused a honeymoon at Banff. She wanted to settle into their little apartment and hide, for dread of meeting Grange and Constance Howard became almost a mania. The young couple took a small furnished apartment over some stores. The furniture was ugly and cheap but not shabby and, as is the case in Calgary dwellings, flooded with light. All through the summer the almost constant sun beat upon some awning of the flat, but the days were not hot. Only for two or three hours does the sun cease to give light in an Alberta summer, but the rare air and cool breeze from the mountains keeps the thermometer down. Gardens flourish, almost making true the saying that one can see the plants growing.

Nowhere are finer vegetables grown or hardier flowers. The tardy spring makes blooming late, but by the middle of June the city literally bursts into blossom. Until the end of August, the gardens are a riot of colour. The unlimited water supply, fed by the mighty Bow River that races through the town at a tremendous speed, added to the constant sun, the rich soil, make gardening a joy. Here the great poppies flame through all the town, the giant and

gorgeous dahlias are without a peer. Here the flowers, as if knowing their life is short, crowd into their blooming the very essence of all beauty.

Marie sighed for a garden. "Don't you worry about any garden just yet, baby," said her husband. "I am not doing anything to make people talk. But you just leave it to me, give me another year, and we'll have a garden that will knock their eye out."

"Are you making money, Tom?"

"You bet your sweet life I'm making money."

"How?"

"Never you mind, kid. I'm making it. I have to go to Lethbridge again to-night. I won't be back for several days."

Marie's life was bearable. Through the days she was alone a great deal, and went back into her world of books and study that she had lived in when she was with Gertrude Hearst. Through the nights she clenched her hands and strove to draw tight a shutter on her thoughts and feelings. She had deliberately, of her own free choice, married Tom. But how could she, who had known only the love of Grange, have dreamed that marriage could be like this? Her old feeling of dislike and repulsion for Tom came back to her with redoubled force. And when he had been drinking! She shuddered with loathing.

When winter settled in, things became harder for Marie. The first glow of possession was over with Tom. He wanted Marie to go about with his friends

and to entertain them. He urged the girl constantly to be "a good sport". At length she agreed to have some of his "crowd", as he called them, in for bridge. They had all given them wedding presents, Tom pointed out to Marie, and they should entertain them. Before the evening was half over, Marie was both amazed and disgusted. Tom had served both gin and Scotch lavishly. The girls began to tell shocking stories, which were received with shouts of laughter by the men. Tom seemed to be enamored of the boldest of them all, and the more he drank, the more incapable he became of hiding his infatuation. Marie thought bitterly what a blessing it would be if he fell so in love with the girl that he would forsake his wife. She was appalled by the futility of her marriage. She had married Tom to keep with her own class—and found herself an alien.

Marie refused to have anything more to do with Tom's friends; and Tom, by this time realizing that he had a better time when Marie was not present, was well content. Marie never went out, and he could go whenever he liked. Altogether it seemed an ideal arrangement. If she had gone about with another set of people, that would have been different. He would not have allowed that.

Early in the spring Tom was anxious to build a house. He bought land down by the river, in an isolated spot, for this purpose. His plans were so ambitious that Marie became alarmed.

"I thought you wanted a garden," argued Tom. "We're not going to live here much longer. I want a place where we can stage some parties."

"But, Tom, just leave it for now. I am not strong enough to work in a garden or manage a big house."

Nothing more was said on the subject. Some weeks later, Marie, while out walking, turned her steps towards the Elbow River, making Tom's lot her objective. The sweet smell of Balm of Gilead and Wolf Willows, the rolling hills to her left, brought back poignant memories of the past, the life on which she had turned her back. She realized, as never before, that if you betray yourself, you never cease to pay the penalty. Of what worth had been her sacrifice? Adele had lived with her a week or two, had flirted with her husband, and then left in a temper. The next thing that they had heard of her, she had married a well-to-do cigar traveller and was living in Los Angeles. She had not needed Marie. Tom had refused, after this experience, to have their family life invaded by Paul, and now Paul lived with a grocer, working day and night for his board when he was not at school. Gabriel hated California. His letters were one long complaint. The winters were raw and the houses poorly heated. The summers hot and dry, the vegetation all brown. There was no life for anyone there, unless they were rich, and he longed for the prairie farm again. His money was nearly all gone and he could not get back. Grange, if he had heard of her marriage, was not

grieving. She read the society columns eagerly for mention of his name. Constance Howard and Lady Houltain had gone back to England, but the papers, on her departure, hinted at her approaching marriage and her speedy return. Grange, in the meantime, was a guest at every social function.

And now, the coming of her child. There had been the great betrayal. She, with an insane father, had given her child a father almost a degenerate in his way. Not until she had become aware of the life within her had she realized the enormous responsibility that rests on a woman in the choosing of her mate. She had sinned against the coming generation, against the Innocents. With the realization of her act, the love for her child grew, she yearned broodingly over the small life nestled so close to her heart.

Pondering thus, she wandered on, the distance unnoted, and then stopped in amazement. There stood the house that Tom had planned to build for her. Carpenters were working about the verandah, workmen were busy levelling the lawn. Her first sensation was one of dismay. She did not want to live in that house, for she dreaded receiving any more from the hands of her husband than she was now obtaining—a decent livelihood. She suspected the source of his quickly acquired wealth, the secret journeys to Lethbridge, of which she must never speak, the late telephone calls which took him out on hurried business. These things all confirmed her

suspicious that Tom was bootlegging. She knew that Lethbridge was a distributing point. She had heard tales of the motor cars that left regularly from that town with liquor consigned to the American border. Her queries as to Tom's source of income had at first been lightly brushed aside by him; now they angered him. And here, in the warm spring sun, as she gazed at the pretty bungalow among the trees, her resolve to use as little of these ill-gotten gains as possible weakened. The warm sun seemed to caress the house. The winding river, not yet swollen by the mountain snows, slipped past the foot of the garden, dimpling and glinting between the pale, straight trunks of the poplar trees.

Tom had done this to please and surprise her. Poor Tom, she was not fair to him. It had been cruel to marry him. She leaned by a tree and gazed at the pretty little house. She pictured to herself her child playing in the garden about the banks of the shallow river. This long waiting was cruel. She knew that Tom had a mistress, but felt that she had no right to protest; for she had vowed that she would never bear another child of his. The fear of him and his coarse love-making was always present. Inevitably he would leave the other woman and come back to her. He always had. Only the fear of hardships for her child kept her by the man's side, and she knew that it would be easier after the baby was born. In spite of

all this, in spite of her coldness, her loathing, Tom had built this house, that she might have her garden.

Marie strolled slowly back and boarded a street car. She would not have to wait long now. The poor girl was thin almost to emaciation, the loose cloak that hung from her shoulders seeming but to accent the sharp outlines of her figure. Her colour was all gone, and purple shadows lay beneath her eyes.

"I am a sight," she thought, catching a glimpse of herself in a store window as she stepped off the car. "I must not come out again, but the flat gets so stuffy." Then, at that instant, happened the one thing for which she had been longing and of which she had been living in dread. Grange was coming towards her. Their eyes, wide and startled, met. For a fraction of a second they both hesitated, and then Grange raised his soft grey hat and passed. Marie bowed her head and moved on; the girl's cup was full.

The following week, Marie's baby was born: a tiny, delicate boy, fair, like his father, but with all his mother's beauty and her great blue eyes. Tom, at first, was proud of the child. He did not stint in the expenditure of money. Marie had a private room at the hospital and everything that she needed for her comfort. However, Marie's recovery was slow. The baby fretted and cried, and Tom's enthusiasm subsided somewhat. Marie seemed to be farther away from him than ever. Well, he would give her a little

longer—then she would come to time. What did she expect? She was his wife.

One day Tom came home to the flat and saw Mrs. Hearst there. He was furious. He had thought that that part of Marie's life was closed forever. He hated them all. He had never forgotten the afternoon when he had seen Marie on the verandah at Clovelly among a gay throng. He knew that she had seen him and had sent Frank down to turn him away. That day he had sworn to make Marie his wife, and more than once he had avenged himself for her disdain of him. Then there had been that Mounted Police Officer, a friend of the Hearsts, riding about the country like an English lord. What had he been to Marie? Once he had seen them together on their horses, like statues of black marble silhouetted against a flaming sky. That day when Marie's father had been taken away, the man had gone to her in the hut—and Marie's eyes had been dewy when she came out. But not a word of thanks to himself, who had stayed with them through the long night of their trial.

"Tom," said Marie, timidly. "You have met Mrs. Hearst."

Mrs. Hearst looked up from the baby which she held in her lap. "How do you do, Tom?" She held out her hand.

Tom ignored it and answered her with a curt nod. "Supper ready, Marie?" he asked, turning to the girl.

"No, it is rather early, isn't it?"

"I have to go out early."

"I was saying to Marie how much we would like to have you both motor to Clovelly some Sunday," said the older woman, vainly trying to ignore Tom's rudeness.

"Marie is not fit for so long a journey," said Tom, "and I know just about how welcome I would be there."

"Sometime later, then," murmured the woman, handing the child to Marie. "I must go now, my dear. I will stop and tell your mother that I have seen you."

"Oh, Tom!" Marie turned when the door had closed on her visitor.

"You can thank your stars I didn't send her home. I was put off their place once and I guess it's not news to you, either. She's got her nerve coming here."

After this Tom was more frequently at home. He dreaded the old influence of the Hearsts on Marie. Sometimes he hated his wife. Never could he do without her. Her beauty enthralled him, her coldness whetted his desire. Through sheer physical weakness on Marie's part, their old relations were re-established. If it would only make him less irritable, more kindly in his interest towards the baby, Marie felt it could be endured.

The summer drew to a close. Not a word had been said by Tom about the new house. Marie was

puzzled. Perhaps, after having it built, he could not afford to furnish it. Perhaps he had sold the lot and the plans with it. She sat before the open window in the dusk, musing. The day had been hot and the baby fretful. Apparently, no food could be found that suited it. Marie was in despair and weary with anxiety and sleepless nights. Tom had been away again for several days. He was relaxing his vigilance. The door opened and Marie turned, startled, unable to see the intruder in the dim light of the room.

"Who is that?" she cried, her voice sharpened by fear.

"Sh—for God's sake."

"Tom," she whispered. "Whatever is wrong? Where is the car?" Had he been driving while drunk?

"Keep quiet, I tell you."

Marie rose and raised her arm to switch on the light.

"Keep that light off, you fool," hissed the man. "Go and pull down the shades."

Mechanically, she obeyed. It looked like a foreign world outside, the lights gilding the purple night, the women in light dresses passing down the street like great pale moths; away off, the high flare of the blazing oil well against the black sky; all seemed remote. Life was concentrated here, in this small room. Tom's fear seemed to palpitate about him—a living, quivering thing.

Marie groped her way to him, where he slumped across the table.

"Tom, you will have to tell me. I can't help you if you don't."

He was trembling violently and his ugly hands crumpled the linen table cover.

"What's that?"

They listened, tense. Footsteps came up the stairs, deliberately, inevitably. They paused on the lower landing. There was a rap, an opening of a door, and voices raised high in greeting. The two people breathed again.

Weakly, Marie dropped into a chair. The darkness drove her mad, pressing on her like a material thing. Tom began to whisper. There had been trouble with the police. He had been at a place on Riverdale Avenue—Marie started. There was a still there that had been operating all summer and someone had got word of it. Tom and his companions had found the house surrounded. He had tried to escape by a cellar window and an officer had chased him. Tom had fired; he thought he had heard a thud. Violent shivering seized him again.

The cheap clock ticked, a motor horn hooted stridently, the minor music of humanity, the hum of a city, came in at the window. Marie sat silent. The child tossed in its little crib, and her heart contracted; her darling. What a heritage had she given it!

"Perhaps it is not as bad as we think, Tom. You will have to give yourself up."

"And be hanged. Yes, sure. You'd like that. I'd be out of the way."

"Don't!" Her hand stole out to Tom's, and he grasped it convulsively.

There were footsteps again outside. This time no need to listen. They knew. The door flew open, throwing a rhomboid of light across the thin rug, the table with the man's flinching body crouched across it, and the policeman entered.

Tom emerged from the affair more luckily than he deserved. Violet Hartmann, his mistress, had lived at the bungalow on Riverdale Avenue, and part of the time Tom Canning had lived there with her. They were considered an eminently respectable couple, fond of solitude as was evidenced by their living so far out of the city. A few men came and went, nothing to arouse suspicion among their nearest neighbours. The information that led to their arrest, and that of their associates, must have come from someone intimate with their own crowd. It was impossible to fix the blame of the shooting, which had gone wide of the mark, on any one person. Tom got off with a heavy fine and a warning.

He became more difficult than ever to live with. Violet Hartmann had gone with his former chief to Lethbridge, he who had operated the fleet of motor cars from Lethbridge to the border; and Tom sus-

pected that there had been perfidy there, although he dare not say so, because he had taken the woman to the house against the advice of the rest of the gang. Money was short, and he had trained himself to many personal luxuries. The money that had been sunk in the Riverdale place could not be retrieved by selling or renting the house, because it was so far out; and he had not the courage to suggest to Marie that she move out there. He could not ply his old trade immediately, for he realized that he was being watched closely by the police.

Marie experienced nothing but relief now. She felt that she owed her husband nothing. He would provide shelter and food for her and the child. That was not more than the wee mite's due. But there would be nothing more. Tom, although sulky and disagreeable, was, for the time being, cowed. Because he would have stooped to any meanness himself, he feared that Marie, if he annoyed her, would tell of his confession of having fired the shot. He stayed away from the house as much as possible, seeking what solace he could with women and drink.

Marie scarcely noticed that he was gone. Her whole heart and soul were wrapped up in her delicate baby. She called in the aid of a doctor, but apparently no formula could be found which suited the child's delicate digestion. One morning, after Marie had bathed the child and tucked him in his little crib, she left the dusting of a chair to go and look at him.

A hundred times a day would she do this, an ever-present fear gripping her heart. When he slept, did he breathe?—and anxiously she would watch for the slow, soft rise of the little coverlet beneath his chin; awake and restless, she feared some new ill; awake and laughing, his joy in her, his close clinging, his soft hands clasped so tightly about her neck, caught at her heart—and her great love for the child hurt her and filled her with fear. How could she, one of life's unlucky ones, keep this most precious soul; this baby with his soft gurgles and tragic eyes, the twining fingers that made her whole body weaken with love. This baby for whom man's love, and the world, could be well lost, for whom the purgatory of a loveless marriage could be endured. And as Marie bent broodingly above the crib, the child stirred restlessly and opened dully his heavy-lidded eyes. Fear stabbed at her heart. She noted the dark rings beneath the eyes, the blue shading about the drawn mouth, the twitching of the hands. Flying to the telephone, she called the doctor. He was not in. She rang up another. He would be up at once—plenty of hot water, mustard, ice, a dose of medicine.

Marie and the doctor worked together unceasingly. The child was put in a mustard bath, rolled in hot blankets. Marie dashed down to the little grocery store and secured ice for ice packs for its head. It was hopeless from the first. Convulsion followed convulsion. At last the stricken mother lay across

the bed, the cold body of her baby in her arms, as if she would warm it with her own vital youth.

The doctor touched her softly. "Ye Gods, what a life for a man," he thought. "Nothing but sorrow and suffering, people calling to one for succor and calling sometimes in vain, despite all one's spending of knowledge and skill and effort. Let them nationalize medicine as the Province threatened, as the unthinking people desired. Perhaps, if one worked for the State instead of the individual, one's heart would not twist with pain. Each would have his quota of patients and would have to hurry on, leaving the mothers and fathers in their agonies of birth and death. Anything would be easier than this, with its long hours, its deep sorrows and disappointments, its poor collections. A man would work eight hours and the poor would have to pay; the State is a first rate collector."

"Is there anyone I can call in, Mrs. Canning?"

"No, no," moaned Marie, kissing the little, cold face. "I am better alone."

"I do not like to leave you and I must go. Where is your mother?"

"In the country. Not mother, please."

"Your husband?"

He saw the girl shudder. "He will be in soon."

"Is there no one I can get?"

Oh, for Grange to hold her close enough to ease this pain of her body, sore with sorrow, to read in his kind eyes that there was still sunlight and beauty in

the world, to feel his cool hands against her burning eyes. Oh, to have Mrs. Hearst, whose kind voice would break this thing in her throat that gripped her and would not let her cry, so that her pent up tears, denied an outlet, roared like a cataract behind her brain. These people she could not have. She shook her head again.

The doctor looked around helplessly. "Mrs. Canning," he said. "I am going to leave you for an hour, then I shall send your husband to you. There is much to be done, details we would spare you if we could. I am no judge of character, if I do not know that you will pull yourself together and face this sorrow. Later on in the afternoon, I shall send a Victorian Order nurse to help you. In the meantime, where can I find your husband?"

Marie averted her eyes. "If he is in town, he will probably be among the row of taxis at the station. He is Tom Canning."

The doctor started. The bootlegger—and an ugly customer. God help the girl! Some people have all the trouble. Imagine that wretch with a wonderful wife like this! Who ever could fathom a woman's choice?

Marie rose and walked to the door of the flat with the doctor.

"I am very grateful for what you have done," she said, "and I shall deserve your confidence in me." She closed the door and turned back to the bedroom.

On the chair lay the crumpled duster, which she had been using. Dear God, was it only hours, these eons of agonizing sorrow; just that morning that she had bathed the pearl-like body, and made the blue eyes twinkle with fun and adoration as she talked the silly nonsense babes and mothers love? She shut herself in the room and faced her Gethsemene.

CHAPTER VI.

FOR the first time since Grange had returned from the war, he was spending a week-end at Clovelly.

Hitherto it had been more than he felt he could endure. The place was so filled with poignant memories of Marie, of their love, that he had shunned it, except for a hasty visit such as courtesy and appreciation of his friend's former kindnesses demanded. This time it had seemed too ungracious to refuse. The marriage of his two dearest friends, Frank Hearst and Constance Howard, could not be overlooked. He had performed the office of best man, he had danced and flirted, he had assisted Mrs. Hearst with the duties of a large house-party over the week-end. Being handsome and fairly rich, he was a most desirable "parti", and a great asset to a hostess who numbered among her guests several pretty girls.

Now, true to a promise to Mrs. Hearst, he was staying on with one or two old and valued friends of the family, the other guests having all departed.

"I want one of your old visits," Laura Hearst had said. "You have avoided Clovelly, and now you must come back to the fold."

The house was quiet. Frank and Constance were away on their honeymoon. The late autumn day,

golden and beautiful as only an Alberta autumn day can be, was drawing to an early close. Grange, who had been considering a ride, changed his mind. The mad, wild flaming of the sunset, now pearling into dusk, the far-off cry of the coyote, the long, level, limitless vision of the prairie, filled him with sadness; as in happier times, Marie beside him, they had filled him with joy and exultation. For nature, aloof, inscrutable, immeasurably big, can only be to us what our moods interpret.

Restlessly the man turned into the house, this haunted house, for the spirit of Marie—adorable, lovable, and beautiful—sat in a low chair by the fire, hovered over tea cups, assisting Mrs. Hearst, or flung sallies that made Frank roar with laughter and caused Mr. Hearst to chuckle a dozen times later in the evening. If one could but know happiness when one had it! Voices were coming from the living room. Grange entered and, moving to Marie's low chair, sat down. The lights had not yet been lit and the dancing flames played fantastic tricks with the figures about the hearth. Hardly was his entrance noted, so deep in discussion were they all.

"I know we need settlers," George Hearst was saying, rumpling his now white hair in his eagerness to express himself. "But we go the wrong way about it. We are discussing that everlasting topic of immigration, Grange.

"Thurston, here, wants them all, all we can get, fill up the country. I say that we have plenty of riff-raff. I would exclude every one but farmers from the British Isles and the United States, and see that they have plenty of money when they come. An insolvent citizen is no asset to a country. Keep the foreigners out, keep everyone out who is not capable of going on the land. The rest are worse than nothing. We have examples of it all about us."

"Yes, I know," broke in Grange. "But are we fair to these people? We spend thousands to get foreign settlers. Would that be necessary if we spent the money on making the country attractive for them when they get here? Canada is the logical land to which people will emigrate now. It has fertile soil, and is the last place on the northern hemisphere where cheap land is to be had. There must be something fine about these people, something splendid and brave and adventurous in every one of them, or they would still be starving in their own countries. They do try the land, you know, but what do we do for them when they get here? We ask them to endure hardships, heavy toil, disappointments, and, which is worst of all, homesickness and loneliness. When they break under the load and drift to the cities, swelling the ranks of the unemployed, turning over their children for the city to care for, then the city groans, puts its hand in its pocket and pays. Why not reverse the thing and

let the cities help support them until they make a good beginning, not after they have failed.

"If, as we insist, the man on the land is the greatest asset to Canada, let us take a page out of Russia's book. Alexander II started a fund, the St. Petersburg Land Fund, for the purpose of transferring his poor people from the congested areas to Siberia. Scouts were sent out first. They reported on fertile places and river valleys. Then families, who desired to change, were gathered together, whole parties of friends, and conducted to their new homes. They received free land, food, seeds, tools, cattle, horses, lumber and transportation. Schools and churches were built immediately. The community was thus planted almost self-sustaining from the first. They had the consolation at once of their church and school. They were not, as our pioneers very often are, planted here and there, far from any community centre.

"Who will say that, in a similar way, the outlay of the British Government has not been repaid a thousand fold by the establishing of the United Empire Loyalists? We spend money to get people here, but we spend little to keep them here. We talk of thousands, and hundreds of thousands immigrating, but we must speak in a whisper of those who are emigrating."

"Many of those people who go to the United States come back," said George Hearst.

"Yes, but they come back broke. They leave

their money in another country, and those who make good over there could make good here."

"It just amounts to this," went on George Hearst. "If we cannot keep the newcomer on the land, the cities won't prosper. If our cities don't prosper, our young men go. Take the case of Jack Mossap, or Bill McLean, or Fred Sinclair; they are just instances of the young chaps, all fine Canadians, who have had to leave Calgary because there were no openings for them. There they go, the finished product. What has it cost the country to raise and educate them? And we bring in the raw material such as this Fourchette family. We keep the father at Ponoka, we pay the mother sixty dollars a month pension, we pay for operations and hospital bills. Gabriel would not part with a cent of his savings after two months in the hospital and two serious operations. Because they could not farm their land, they have been nothing but a heavy liability."

"But this family is an exception, surely," queried Ernest Thompson.

"Yes, indeed, an exception for Belgians," said Mrs. Hearst. "Belgians almost invariably make good, and some of this family will make good. Gabriel, the oldest boy, will come back to the farm; Paul is very clever. The small children are too young to know anything about; but we cannot judge a whole people by one unfortunate family."

"Nevertheless, it is the foreigner who wants the doles," said George Hearst. "And it is the foreigner who causes half the labour troubles. Take the coal mining regions. It is not the British miner there that is declaring all the strikes, but the foreigner. They are easily led by agitators. They dislike the rigours of our winters and crowd into the cities. They lack the pride of a British citizen and avail themselves of charity which they do not need.

"Surely, with the unemployment situation in England what it is, it is the logical thing that we settle our own people in the country first. We have the same ideals, we speak the same language. Keep out the people of central Europe entirely. Generally speaking, the Japs and the people of northern Europe are the only foreign settlers that carry themselves."

"Japs!" almost snorted Mr. Thurston. "Now there is a people I would keep out."

"Why, sir?" asked Grange, quickly.

The older man glared at him wrathfully.

"I suppose you would like to see the country flooded with Japs. I tell you, my boy, that problem is becoming serious. Let them stay in their own country, I say."

"But they can't," protested Grange, rising and lighting a cigarette as he became more interested in the conversation. "They have outgrown their country and every time they tried to settle themselves in logical places, England and the United States have

shoved them back—so now they are coming out here. No one would have expected England to keep to her tight little Island. Moreover, I think that we should make sure that the Japanese question is not largely the American carpet-baggers' bugaboo. They come here, they work hard, they mind their own business and promote industries that only thrive if longer hours than white men will give are devoted to them. British Columbia borrows its anti-Japanese cry from California, where the sentiment is strongest. And yet there the total land owned or leased by Japanese is but two per cent, and the population is only two per cent. Surely not so formidable a thing! In Oregon and Washington, the figures are much less."

"But they can't be assimilated," protested one of the men.

"How do we know? Give them two or three generations. The Indians were assimilated out west here to a much greater degree than easterners ever dreamed. Many a well-known old-timer goes about with a touch of the cloud; and the Indians were aborigines, a savage people—certainly not Aryans."

"Cht, cht," spluttered George Hearst. "If it is young fellows like you who are going to handle the affairs of the country, no wonder you predict black ruin. I tell you, Canada is about to come into her own. She stands on the brink of such an era of prosperity as the world has never seen. Think of our

area, compare it to Europe—Alberta alone greater than all Germany."

"But not peopled," said Grange.

"Our wheat fields . . . We are the granary of the world."

"And we are farming it, with a few exceptions, carelessly."

"We have one-fourteenth of the coal supply of the world."

"And, to use a 'bridge' expression, if we aren't careful we are going to go to bed with it. We can get it neither mined or shipped at cheap enough rates to compete with United States. A new fuel will be invented, and we shall still have one-fourteenth of the coal supply of the world."

George Hearst turned pettishly to his wife. "Laura, talk sense to this boy. These youngsters are going crazy. Frank was saying things along the same lines to me the other day. If ever a boy should be a proud and loyal Canadian, he should be. He has been trained to it, yet you should have heard the nonsense he was talking."

Mrs. Hearst smiled at Grange. Both men had become a little heated with their argument.

"Frankly, George, I think that it is a good sign," she said. "The very fact that these men are interested in these things, and are thinking of them, shows that they have become aware of their country. Dear knows, perhaps people like you and I are like fond

but foolish parents who, seeing the too bright eye and the fevered cheeks of their child, refuse to take its temperature for fear of what they shall read. I grant you that ours is a wonderful country," she continued, hastily, as her husband shifted forward impatiently in his chair. "But at the dawn of the twentieth century we were all saying, 'Canada has achieved a national consciousness; the twentieth century is hers,' and it is a quarter over now. I know there was the war, but that can't be blamed entirely for the small realization of our hopes. True, our exports are increasing tremendously, but we must admit that that does not bring prosperity, for if you look over the list of our exports you will find that they are chiefly raw materials. This does not lessen our unemployment problems. What is the good of exporting all this raw material if we are going to buy it back manufactured?

"Oh, there is much that I agree with in what Grange has said. Sometimes it seems to me that Canada is one of the most inert countries in the world. We have the United States behind us economically and England behind us politically—and so we drift."

"And your cure for all of this, Madam?" asked her husband angrily, tapping his fingers on the arm of his chair.

Grange and Mrs. Hearst smiled.

"We have elected some of our outstanding Canadians to look after the cure," said Laura Hearst, bowing slightly towards her husband. "Of course,

if they refuse to believe that the patient is ailing, however slightly, we cannot hope for a very clever diagnosis."

George Hearst rose. "Well, gentlemen, I still believe in our prosperity. Let us play bridge until dinner is announced. We shall leave Grange with Laura, for I know that she has been longing to have him to herself. But," he turned and pointed towards the wide window, "if you think that with wheat jumped to one dollar and sixty-two cents to-day, and running forty bushels to the acre, all about here for miles, that we're going straight to ruin, you are a pair of pitiful pessimists." He turned and went out.

Mrs. Hearst shook her head and smiled as the door closed.

"If Frank had not had the foresight to go in for mixed farming, if he had not studied and availed himself of every aid to farming that the Government provides in the way of literature and schools, we would not be here to gather in our bushels of wheat. Farming is hard work. That is the whole thing in a nut shell."

"But you still believe in the west, Aunt Lol?" protested Grange.

"Yes, Grange, I do," said the woman with conviction. "But the days of easy money in the west are over. We can no longer stake everything on wheat. We are wearing the land out, and we always have the fear of a drought. I have had meals at farms where

everything on the table, including milk, butter, eggs and bread, came from the store. In the lean years, these are the people who face disaster.

"I believe that the day of the big farms is over, as well as the day of the wheat farms. I would like to see the Government placing the settlers on small farms, a hundred acres or less—something the European can understand and handle. In that way they could all afford irrigation in the dry sections, they would have a better social life and a surer livelihood. In that way our population would grow.

"The life of the settlers on this prairie has been hard, Grange, and in a land like Canada, with railways knitting up the country, why should they have to endure the miseries people had to face two hundred years ago? Is a man justified, with the country as far advanced as it is now, in taking a woman to the wilds of northern Ontario or to the lonely stretches of our prairie?

"Fifteen miles from here is a little woman from London married to a returned soldier. She has no neighbour. She has three small children and her health is wretched. She has never been off the place since she went there, nearly four years ago. She has no conveyance to take her. Twice, when children were born, she has faced death alone, except for her husband. Children die out here of little ailments, because they cannot get to a doctor.

"Another woman went to the asylum. She went into a mad frenzy when it rained or snowed and she could not see the strip of road that threaded past the far-distant end of the coulée."

"It sounds like a splendid idea, Aunt Lol," said Grange. "But see what is happening while the Government is forming a policy. That word 'Government' hides a multitude of sins. I often think if, instead of saying 'The Government is giving away this, or the Government has neglected this, or has been guilty of that', we said, 'The Honorable Mr. So-and-so had given, Mr. What-you-call-him failed to seize his opportunity for this, or Mr. Some-one-else neglected to look after that, being away playing golf at the time', then our interest would be aroused and public affairs improved."

"We make our politics too impersonal. Many a sixteen-year-old girl in England knows more of their complicated politics than mature Canadians of theirs. As individuals, politicians will arouse our indignation or approbation. But 'Government', that is far beyond us. To find fault with it seems like passing a vote of censure on the Lord for the Japanese earthquake or some such thing."

"But I am wandering far afield. Let us get back to the land. I am glad to know that you, its great champion, have not lost hope."

"Oh, yes, Grange, I believe in settling on the land. My faith in the prosperity of a country is in its soil."

I never fail to experience a thrill of satisfaction over the fact that the eggs we use are laid by hens we raise, that are raised on wheat we grow. Our butter, our milk, our vegetables, our meat; I love to handle, to work with it all. I have a feeling that we are doing that thing on earth which keeps the world sane and balanced—giving to the soil, taking from the soil. I love it all—the sky, the prairies, the foothills, the fields of grain and the cattle; the very smell of the stables in the keen morning air.

"But I am not a real pioneer. We had money when we came, and my children were always able to attend good schools. I could go away for a holiday. It is for these incoming people, who are entering a different west than the old west to which I came, that we must make life bearable for awhile, for on them rests the prosperity of Canada. As you said, Grange, there is something fine about them all. With a little help, they will succeed.

"Of course, these Fourchettes, of whom my husband spoke, do not make a typical case. The man was a worker and would have made good. Gabriel is the great stumbling block there. He was an apt pupil of Tom Canning, a young man whom I can't abide. Madame Fourchette needs a man to guide her, and naturally turns to her eldest son. She will not listen to Marie. In fact, I sometimes think that she actually dislikes the girl and would break with her altogether,

if it were not for the hope of getting little favours from her. Poor little Marie!"

"Why do you say that?" asked Grange. He struggled to speak naturally. Why must his heart leap at the mention of her name, and electric currents shoot through his pulses. "She has a husband and a baby, I hear. That should make her happy." His hands were clinched tightly in his pockets. He got up and stood with his back to his hostess, looking with hurt and unhappy eyes across the prairies. It was dusk, their time; like a great shell, opal-tinted, the skies shut down, she had said. He had held her close in his arms, there, under the poplars, and he had not dared to possess himself of so sweet and pure a thing, although they had wanted each other, he knew that. Now she was the wife of Tom Canning. She had a child. He put his forehead against the cool window.

"Grange, come here." It was Mrs. Hearst, speaking softly. She rose and poked the fire. The coal split and broke into dancing flames. She settled at one end of the big chesterfield and patted it.

"Come and tell me the whole story. I want to know. You loved little Marie. When I realized that—centuries ago it seems, doesn't it? before the war—I was so happy, though worried, of course, for I appreciated your problems. Then came the war, and I thought those problems might work out their own solution. I come back and I find Marie married to a man she disliked, and in no way worthy of her. I

find you growing hard and bitter, drinking a little too much, flirting a little too desperately with girls, making love to all of them, loving none of them. And so I conclude that your love for Marie was no light thing. Why did you not marry her? What is the explanation?"

"I guess there is nothing to explain," said Grange bitterly. "I suppose it was a case of blood will tell, with her, although I tried to persuade myself that it would not. I told Marie of my love before I went away, the last time I saw her, and she loved me then; at least I have always deluded myself with the idea that she did."

"Oh, he is trying to be bitter and hard," thought Mrs. Hearst, "but he is just like a big boy, terribly hurt and bewildered."

"I did not mention marriage or extract any promise of faithfulness from Marie. I was going to my mother—and you know mother. We were to be so happy together, now that we were reconciled at last. She had grieved about me so much that I could not go to her with the story of Marie. There would be time enough for that if I came through the war, but Marie must have known that I loved her."

"Marie is no fool," said Mrs. Hearst, quietly. "She always discounted herself, owing to her family. Moreover, a woman is usually a fool if she believes a man's talk of love when it is not of marriage also."

"Then, as you say, there was her terrible family," continued Grange. "I had taken her crazy father to Ponoka. The thought of Marie as the mother of my children drove me wild with joy, but the thought of mad Henri Fourchette as their grandfather frightened me."

"Marie is illegitimate," threw in Mrs. Hearst.

"Illegitimate?" Grange frowned. He wondered if that wasn't as bad as an insane father.

"Yes," nodded Mrs. Hearst. "Her mother told me all about it. Now that Henri Fourchette is out of the way, the woman brags about it, as of something of which she is rather proud. Of course, it is not to be wondered at. In Madame Fourchette's day, six per cent of the children of Belgium were illegitimate, and when you consider that she must have been very poor, very young, and very beautiful, she could hardly have escaped her fate. I understand that Marie's father was very well born, which would explain Marie, who inherited nothing from her mother but her good looks. However, I interrupted." She knew the facts of Marie's birth were troubling Grange, but was also sure that he would think better of the unknown father than of Henri Fourchette in a little while, when he got used to the idea.

"At any rate, he should know," she consoled herself. "He'll soon be drumming up parallel cases in history, and thinking the whole thing very beautiful and romantic. Men are like that—inveterate sentimentalists."

The whole thing should be cleared up. One never knows."

"You left Marie," she prompted, aloud.

"I left Marie," the man continued, "and went home. Marie was to go in and work for Gertrude. That galled me, although I knew that she was a little brick to do it. She said that domestic service would give her more time to go on with her reading. I wrote a long letter to Marie while I was on ship-board. Her answer! Poor little Marie. The writing was so wretchedly illiterate, the note so short. I was thinking so much of my mother. I was back with my old regiment, meeting old friends. The prairies, the mounted police, little Marie, seemed like a vague dream. I thought that I had got over a mad infatuation, and congratulated myself on not having said anything which would have committed me in any way. My mother marshalled every pretty girl up for my inspection, sure that if I married an English girl I would stay at home.

"But the war was long, and I was wounded once. I had seen amazing things, and I began to think. It dawned upon me that the love of Marie for me, and my love for her, were the finest things I knew of in life. I wrote to her again and the answer was so sweet, so jolly, so well written. I could picture her hurrying up to her little room after the dishes were done each day, and practicing her handwriting. Poor Marie, she had had plenty of time to make herself

perfect. Because it was wartime, I did not speak of my love, and never of my hope that we would marry; time enough for that when the ghastly mess was over.

"After the Armistice, mother wanted to come back with me, but the accommodation on the boat was hard to arrange and I longed to get back and have a few days alone with Marie. I was detained all along the way. I stopped off in Montreal to see about getting this position with the trust company that I have, and, because of my English introductions, was entertained by the chief. I was semi-officially entertained at Ottawa, where I had to arrange about leaving the service. In Toronto I took the Flu, you remember. On my arrival in Calgary there was a cable from my mother saying she would be in Calgary the next day. I had wired to Marie to meet me and she was not at the station. I shall never forget the bitterness of that disappointment. I met some of the other chaps, and we had a party. In the morning, I consoled myself that she might not be at the Girls' Club and so had missed my wire. I planned our day. I went and bought my car that morning. Marie and I would drive out here and open up the house. Annie would welcome us. I hurried to the Club to get her address. They told me that she was staying there with her mother and that they would give her my message. I waited about the hotel until evening, then I went to the train to meet mother. The next morning I telephoned again, but Marie was not in. They said that

they would have her call me. I never heard from her. I thought to myself—" he moved restlessly. "Ah, dear old Aunt Lol. What is the use of bothering you with it all? I thought to myself, 'This is poor mother's last show. She will never be really happy with me again,' so I gave her all my time. Constance came and the three of us motored to Banff and Lake Louise, out to the Coast and back. We saw cowboys and Indians, and I sent her back to England absolutely happy, after six wonderful weeks. I determined not to spoil one day of the whole holiday for her and planned to write and tell her of Marie. If, after that, she was decent enough to want to see my wife, we would go over.

"When I telephoned the Club the night mother left, I was told that Marie had gone home. The next day I drove out to the Fourchette place. Two children scuttled up the little path in front of me and dived behind the house. A youngster with a dirty face was crying. I knocked at the door and the mother, fat and untidy, opened it. I asked for Marie and she told me that she had married Tom Canning and had gone away. I must have looked like an absolute fool, for she laughed and shut the door in my face."

Grange ceased talking. An ember dropped. The cream separator whirled its song back in the milk house. Mrs. Hearst dabbed at her eyes and finally spoke.

"And you still love little Marie, Grange?"

The man drew in his breath in a long, shuddering sob.

"Oh, my God, love her? I cannot do without her. I guess that I am a one-woman man. I don't know, but I cannot forget Marie. Each day gets worse because I become more aware of the foreverness of it all."

He arose again and walked to the window, now a black square, brushing the smooth wings of his hair.

"She is in Calgary. Did you know?"

"Yes," answered Grange. "I met her once."

"What did you do?"

"Oh, just raised my hat and walked on like a fool, not at all what I meant to do if I should ever see her. It must have been just before her baby was born, and when I saw her coming towards me, I suddenly felt no love for her at all. I was only hurt and angry."

"I went to see her the last time I was in Calgary."

The man whirled about.

"Marie! What was she like; was she happy; did she——?"

"Yes, she mentioned you. Come and sit down again and I shall tell you. I went to the Club for her address, which they seemed loath to give. I imagined that they thought Marie unhappy and that I might have an unsettling effect. She lives in a mean little apartment over some stores, but she keeps it spotless, and her baby is lovely, though small and very delicate looking. Marie does not look well either; much too

thin and all her wonderful colouring gone. She was so happy to see me, but she kept the barriers up. We could not lapse into our old confidences, for it was a long time since we had seen each other—and there is a dignity about Marie which makes questions, unless invited, impossible.

"We talked of Clovelly and of her home. Gabriel was in California, but not doing well and wanting to come back. Paul was at high school in Calgary. She had wanted him to live with her, but Tom had objected. The Cannings had gone back to the States, 'So poor mother has lost her one and only friend', said the girl. Adele was at last free of the Children's Aid. She had married an American and was behaving beautifully. 'The Children's Aid people never understood Adele,' explained Marie. 'She could not stand the loneliness and confinement of domestic service.'

"'And you, Marie?' I asked, and she shrugged her thin little shoulders and said, 'Oh, me—I think I was not needed anywhere; as things have turned out, I see that. But now my baby needs me.' She held him close. 'And that makes everything bearable.'

"I said, 'Frank is to be married in June'. She was pleased and asked whom he was marrying, but when I told her that it was Constance Howard, she cried out, 'But Grange!'. I explained that there had never been anything between you and Constance, although your mother had wished it, and her lovely little head went back on her white throat—you know the way it does—

and her round, white chin trembled. But her lips were firm when she said—

“‘Oh, I always thought that Constance and Grange would marry, especially when she came over with his mother and they were together so much.’

“Her husband came up then, and his manner towards me was very rude. I could see how unhappy it made Marie and left hurriedly. I cannot go again, for I think I only made her suffer.”

Grange took a little notebook from his pocket.

“I never dreamed of her imagining that Constance and I were in love with each other,” he said. “I can understand that she might think that there was something between us, for our manner to each other is always so affectionate. She is like a dear sister to me.” Then his mouth under the trim little moustache tightened and his eyes narrowed. “Still, little Marie need not have married Canning.”

“It was likely on account of her mother,” said Mrs. Hearst, quickly. “She is a terrible woman. She caters to the Children’s Aid in order to get more and more and more from them. It was just at the time that Gabriel was in hospital, and frightened nearly to death for fear he would have to give up his savings to pay for his own hospital and doctor bills. Adele was giving trouble. No doubt the women at the Club knew all about you and Marie and were alarmed at the sight of your expensive car and your rank as a soldier. I know their type so well. They are always suspecting

their girls of immorality. Every rich man who looks at a poor girl, they imagine looks lustfully. Tom Canning was of Marie's class, therefore he would not regard her as a prey.

"They are so often narrow-minded widows or old maid daughters of unknown clergymen, with no knowledge of the world. They need a job, and they are considered ideal for the handling of young girls. To them, who have experienced so little joy in life, naturally the joyousness of young people has in it something that they do not know or understand. Because of their repressed sex complex, they think it must be sex. I think the uplifters are going mad on this sex question anyway. I know of a well-known club woman who told me with a virtuous air that she tramped the parks on summer nights to study moral conditions in our public gardens; the Lord knows what she did with her data when she got it. I attended a luncheon of a large women's club, and we had reports on immorality among domestic help, immorality in the high schools, immorality in the public parks; the necessity of supervision at the public playground. the report of a committee delegated to investigate houses of ill-fame, a report of the committee on venereal diseases; and to show that their activities took in every phase of Canadian life, a motion was passed to urge Parliament to pass a bill insisting on sanitary mattresses for the people."

Grange laughed. "Dear old Aunt Lol," he said. "I am afraid the day of your intellectual rule is over."

"Why?" asked the woman. "What you say is true, my dear. I feel my power slipping. I used to go to these meetings in town and dominate them. I had faith in them. But now I am brushed aside."

"Of course you are," cried Grange, tapping his knee with the little book. "Because you have common sense, and because you see more than one side of a question. Once you do that you are lost. In this day and generation, you must have only one slant on a thing, and the crazier the slant, the better. Then you are a success."

They both rose.

"It has been good to talk to you," said Grange, gazing down gratefully at the little woman. "The whole thing has been nearly driving me mad, and I started to run a bit amok in Calgary. This worry about Marie and the unusual confinement in an office are getting me. I can't sleep. I am chucking the job and going back to the Mounted Police."

"I think that is wise, Grange," said Laura Hearst. "And I am glad also to have had this talk. I had been worried about you ever since your mother left. I began to wonder if it might be Constance. Then Marie's look, when I told her of Frank's and Constance's marriage started me thinking again, and I saw you wince when George mentioned the Fourchettes. Grange, we must be fair to little Marie. She was

justified, to a certain extent, in thinking you would marry Constance. The poor girl is painfully conscious of her place in the world, and no doubt great pressure was brought to bear on her by her mother. You know, as I know, that Marie could never deliberately do an ignoble thing."

"Yes, I know that," said Grange with conviction. How well he knew it, he who had demanded of her such strength, and had made of her love such sorrow. "Will you tell me where she lives?" He flipped open the little book.

"Oh, Grange," protested Mrs. Hearst, in distress, "you must not go to her."

"No, I won't," the man hastily reassured her, "I just want to know where she lives. I will not go to her, unless, at some time, I become convinced of her absolute need of me."

When he was left alone in the room, Grange sat down again in front of the fire. He was conscious of a warm glow all through his body. Marie and he still loved each other, and that was enough for the present. Peace came with the thought. He was weary, as after a long night of weeping that had brought joy in the morning. He snuggled into the big, soft cushion and slept.

CHAPTER VII.

THE world was brightening for Tom Canning. He had been through a long, hard siege. Funds were low, he had lost his mistress, his wife was cold and unapproachable; but now fortune was beginning to smile again. His former chief in Lethbridge had sent word to him that he would employ him again, having "fixed" things. He had a new mistress. This time he would be more careful in his work and would not be so hasty with his gun. As for Marie, she would soon come around when she found that he was rich again; he knew women well enough for that.

He turned in surprise and some slight annoyance when the doctor spoke to him. He did not want a fare this afternoon, for he was leaving at dark on his first trip to Lethbridge.

"Mr. Canning?"

"Yes, sir. What can I do for you?"

"I am Dr. Roltz," said the man. "I have just come from your house."

"Marie?" cried the bootlegger, fear blanching his face.

"Lord, the man loves her," flashed across the doctor's mind. "No, not Mrs. Canning. It is your small son."

"Is he sick?" Then, looking into the doctor's eyes, "Not very sick?" he whispered.

"I'm sorry—the very worst."

"Not——"

The doctor nodded.

"I'll go at once."

"Tell your wife that I shall call again this evening," said the doctor, as the car started.

As Tom Canning raced through the city to Marie, he was a prey to many mixed emotions. How could he leave Marie to-night? And yet, if he failed to respond to his chief's call the first time, would he receive a second call? The wee baby! He had never noticed it enough. He had been half afraid of him, for he was so delicate; half jealous of him, for he had so completely possessed all of Marie's thoughts; half resentful, for Marie's all-enveloping love for the child had shoved him away from his own son. Now the little fellow was gone, and the man was half amazed at the hungry, lost feeling in his heart. Marie had been more his before she was a mother, but instinctively he knew that she would be less his than ever, now that the child was gone. Oh, Marie! He brought the car to a stop viciously. He hated her, at times; she kept him in a constant fever. If he had never known her, life would have been rich for him according to his ideals. Because he had known her, nothing he achieved was ever entirely worth while.

He hurried up the steps to the little apartment. Marie came to the door to meet him. Her pallor frightened him. He knew that she felt him to be an intruder, invading the sanctuary of her sorrow, and he could not tell her that it was his sorrow, too. How could he tell her, that, having mistresses, he wanted only his wife; having ignored his son, he would have given up every chance of material success in the world, to have him back? Somewhere within Tom Canning was hidden a dumb, inarticulate spirit of nobility that had demanded nothing less than a Marie for his wife, had flickered up at the thought of a son, but that had never been strong enough to prove worthy of that wife or son.

They spoke in whispers. Marie told him of the fight for the child's life, the kindness of the doctor, of the nurse who was coming. They arranged details for the funeral. The nurse came and she and Marie went into the kitchen to prepare supper. The thought of food sickened Marie, and she tiptoed back into the dimly lit dining-room. Tom was just closing the door on the bedroom. She watched that closed door jealously. Her baby, her baby! and knew that all the time she was not fair to Tom. Oh, what a sorry jumble it all was. Would the man never come out? Why did he stay so long? She had not seen her baby since Tom had come. She wanted him all to herself. The circle of her arms felt so vast and empty that she knew the mothering of all the world would leave a

hollow ache. Finally, she could stand it no longer. The girl opened the door softly and stepped into the room. Tom stood at the foot of the little crib, only his face and collar visible, waxy white in the light that came from the other room. She went to him. A long, shuddering sob escaped her, which the father echoed. She found herself in his arms, sobbing her heart out. After many minutes Marie calmed down. She thought of Christ on dark Gethsemane, of his need of solace, and the deep sleep of his well beloved disciples. She thought of her own deep sorrow and of her only ease of spirit coming from one she hated, and wondered which type of experience was the more bitter.

The three of them—the nurse, Marie and Tom—sat about the little supper table, the light from the hideous green glass dome shining with ghastly rays upon their white faces.

Marie was unutterably weary. After her deep suffering of the day, a great lassitude and numbness possessed her.

"Marie," said Tom. "I have to go away to-night."

The girl looked up in surprise. "To-night, Tom?"

"Yes, it is important. I am going out of town, but will be back the day after to-morrow."

The nurse looked shocked. Marie gave Tom a long look, noted his avoidance of her gaze, and thought, "Bootlegging again; surely he had enough of that". For her child's sake, she would have endeavoured to

dissuade the man, for she was convinced that the business would end in disaster. Tom was ugly when aroused, and cowardly. She thought of the infinite relief it would be to have her husband out of the house. It would leave her an opportunity to find work, to pack up her few treasures, her baby's clothes; that little son, who had slipped so quickly from her, as if unwilling to accept the sacrifice Marie was prepared to make for his physical well-being.

She helped Tom pack his bag.

"I am sorry I have to go, Marie," he said, standing by the door. The memory of her coming to him in her sorrow was still warm with him. He stooped and kissed her gently. Poor Tom! Sighing the girl turned from him. How she had cheated everyone when she had not been true to herself. Cheated her mother whom now she could only help surreptitiously, cheated her friends, the Hearsts, who had guided her by their fond endeavor into a way of life upon which she had turned her back, cheated her baby, whose ill-health she blamed on her own unhappiness, above all cheated Tom.

Long into the night Marie sat by the wide window gazing down into the white street. It had snowed all day and now had turned bitterly cold. The street lights went out and the cold moon rode in the high sky, casting blue shadows of buildings on the road. The last warm glow from dwellings flickered out. Her fingers became numb with the cold that crept

through the cracks of the window. Occasionally she would breathe softly against the glass, and, with the end of the scarf she had wrapped about herself, wipe away the frost. A late motor would whirr through the streets, the wood about the building crack and snap in the frost. She thought of Tom, driving through this steadily increasing cold, and wondered if he had put on his heaviest underwear and his extra sweater. All night he would drive at terrific speed, never sure from whence would come the command to stop. He was a marked man now. He would do something desperate if ever he were challenged. Marie shivered. There had been that shooting affair on Riverdale Avenue. If her baby had lived, could he ever have escaped the destiny of his paternity? She thought of Henri Fourchette and tried to derive consolation for her loss, but the ache in her heart remained.

The screech of footsteps from the protesting snow came down the empty street. Listlessly Marie's eyes followed the tall figure of the man. He turned, looking up at her darkened window, stood for a moment, then retraced his steps. It was Grange. Fascinated, the girl's wide eyes followed his retreating form, but her heart was too heavy to leap at the sight of him. He had sought her out. She knew that, when she saw him turn and gaze up at her window. And if he came again she would be gone. Should she run after him and tell him that she was leaving her husband?

She wrapped her scarf more tightly about her and rocked slowly back and forth in the dark room. There was no place for Grange to-night in her home or heart. Yet both were empty, empty. The round, clear space on the white window frosted over. Marie rose and tiptoed past the nurse's couch to the bedroom. She would sleep this last night near her child. Oh, that it could be her last night on earth. The future stretched ahead grey and dreary. She was like a man who has been released from bondage by being turned out on a lonely desert.

Mechanically, Marie got through the routine of the next day. Strange it seemed that people passed by on the streets, that bakers and milkmen called at her door, that food was prepared and dishes washed; that all the business of living could go on, when, for her, life had ceased. She felt like a ghost in the world of material things. In the afternoon Grange came. At his ring, Marie opened the door. They stood looking at each other a moment, their old long, intimate look, and the years between were wiped away.

"I saw you last night," said Marie, explaining her lack of surprise.

Grange stepped into the room. "I could not get you out of my mind. I walked the streets for hours."

"Then you know?"

The man nodded. "I chanced to see it in the paper. The name caught my eye. Poor little Marie." He held her hand, caressing his cheek with it as of old.

"Don't be kind, dear," choked the girl. "It makes it hard to carry on." She withdrew her hand and brushed away the tears that glistened on her long lashes. "Do you want to see my baby? Oh, Grange, he is so sweet."

They moved softly into the small living room and looked down at the little coffin. Grange was strongly moved at the sight of Marie's child. The sweep of the brow just above the eyes, the curve of the cheek, so like the mother's, the beautiful shape of the head. Oh, the bitterness of knowing that there was someone else closer to Marie in her sorrow than himself! He wanted to take her tenderly in his arms and comfort her, and he was outside this great circle of her grief.

They moved back into the dining-room and sat on the two stiff chairs facing each other. Grange brushed back the wings of his hair in embarrassment. He must not leave until he had said that for which he had come, and the moment was so unpropitious.

"Where is Canning?" he asked, at length. He could not bring himself to use the word "husband".

"He is away," said Marie, listlessly. "He had to go on business, but he will be back to-morrow morning."

"Marie," Grange leaned towards her, "what are you going to do next?"

"Get a position, if I can."

"You are not going to stay here?"

"I couldn't, Grange. It was the baby who kept me here for many months."

"Then you must come to me." The man spoke decisively, standing up and buttoning up his coat.

"Grange!" Marie looked up, startled.

"Oh, little Marie," broke forth the man in anguish. "I, in my stupidity, ruined everything for us, letting things drift, waiting for time to straighten out our problems. And where are we now? If you get a position, you will still be at the beck and call of your—husband. He will find you wherever you go. You will never know, on going out, whether he will be waiting for you when you return."

Marie passed her hand across her brow. She was so tired, so spent with grief. "It is so hard to decide anything just now," she said. "And whatever I do, seems to be the shameful thing to do. Tom was fond of the baby, in his way. He is very distressed and would never have gone away had it not been absolutely necessary. It is so brutal to leave him and go to you just now."

"He has never considered you," broke in Grange, frowning.

"I know, but I married him, and he loves me."

"Do you love him at all, Marie?"

Marie shivered. "I hate him," she whispered. "Ugh, how I hate him. Oh, I would never stay with him. I must go away, and if he can forget me, he will be happier without me. But I cannot go to you, Grange. That would be too bitter for him."

"Marie, do you love me; don't I come into your calculations at all?"

"Oh, Grange!" She twisted her hands, raising her eyes to his, eyes brimming with love.

"Little Marie, I am sorry." He held her close to him, and they clung together, fearful of another parting. It maddened the man to see her thus, in her cheap little flat, weighed down by her sorrow, dreading the coming of her husband.

"When does Canning come back?" he asked, releasing her.

"In the morning, I think," said Marie. "He will be here early. The funeral will be to-morrow afternoon."

"And to-morrow evening?"

"I don't know. I shall talk to Tom. He will not stay here. He is not pleased with me when I am so unhappy, and he has a new mistress, to whom he is very devoted. He will tell me that he is going away somewhere. If he does not," she averted his gaze, "I will go to the Girls' Club. I—I shall think up some errand."

"I can't worry you with things now, dear," said Grange. "You should come to me to-morrow afternoon. Think it over. I shall wait in for you. I have a suite at the Devenham. I won't worry you at all. You shall have the place to yourself. I have rejoined the force and will be away. There is an

elderly woman keeping house for me. She will look after you."

"And what of you, Grange; what would the future hold for you then; what have I, who always had so little, to give you now? My freshness is gone, my beauty is gone. All the things for which you loved me have withered. I am so dull, so stupid."

The man's hands grasped her arms. He stooped and, with a quick intake of his breath, kissed her lightly on the cheek.

"They will all blossom again, little Marie, when we have each other," he said, softly. "You must come to the Devenham, dear."

He was gone, and in his place stood Marie's husband. He was white, and his uncertain eyes were as green as a cat's. The muscles of his jaw were working as he laboured for control. Marie looked at him with eyes wide with alarm. He misunderstood her fear.

"Who was that chap?" he asked, at length, nodding towards the door.

"Grange Houltain, a friend of the Hearsts," said Marie. The very speaking of these dear names revived her, gave her courage, and the sense that she was loved and wanted.

"The chap that took your father to the asylum?"

Marie nodded.

"I thought so. When did he start coming here?"

"This is the first time." Oh, the shameful of

the thing—that this man, with his Violet Hartmanns, should catechise his wife in this way.

"That sounds good." He sat down with a sneer and Marie found herself thinking. "Poor soul, he is weak, he is tired and shocked, he has raced back the long journey because of the baby."

She looked about the ugly, sordid little room. She thought of her baby on the other side of the door. Could there never be anything of dignity in her life, even at a time like this? Why would not everyone leave her alone?

"You know that I always tell the truth," she said, quietly. "It was natural that Mr. Houltaim should come, Tom. He saw it in the papers. Everyone we know has come, neighbours whom we didn't know. People are so kind when one is troubled. The grocer downstairs sent up roses, Tom—tiny little pink rose-buds. I shall put the kettle on, you look so tired. Did you have supper?"

The man shook his head. It all sounded right, but he was not convinced. Marie went to the kitchen. When she raised the window to bring the milk in from the window sill, she saw Grange walking slowly up the street. He had, of course, seen her husband come in and was keeping a vigil. He turned quickly at the sharp crash of the window as Marie lowered it. Going quickly into the dining-room, the girl began laying the cloth for supper, but first she lowered the window shade. Grange was sauntering slowly down the street again.

Tom ate hungrily, sulkily, taking quick glances at his wife when he thought he was not observed. She sat opposite to him, cold and pale, great violet shadows under her eyes, which were sunken with weeping. Like a cold hand on his heart, it struck him that she thought of him not at all now. She neither loved him nor hated him. Never again would she urge him to give up bootlegging or drinking, never urge him to put on warmer clothing, never summon a smile to his face, that the baby might bask in it.

A frenzy seized him. He must break down that wall which had sprung up in a day. This wife of his must, in some way, be made aware of him. If from this cold metal he could get one spark of emotion, he might shape it to his desires. As they cleared away the dishes, they rarely spoke, but inwardly Tom Canning was raging.

Why did he bother with her? Why could he not stay away from her? He had been seized with a sudden notion at Lethbridge that he should be near his wife. Now, if ever, in their mutual grief, she would soften towards him, and he had raced back many miles through the cold. He had felt physically sick at the sight of Grange Houltain coming out of the flat. A nice thing—a man risked his freedom, his very life to make money, and this was what he came home to—to that stick! He viciously switched off the light and went into the other room. Marie sat beneath the ugly light of the green dome turning over

the paper. Was she such a stick after all? He remembered her dewy eyes as Grange Houltain came out of the shack. He looked sharply at her. Her hair was ruffled, he could swear it. Marie, glancing up, caught his look and unconsciously smoothed the side of her head.

Tom stood in front of her. "Come along to bed," he said. "You're tired."

Marie clenched the sides of the paper more tightly. "I am not tired. I am not going to bed."

"What's the idea?"

"I have told you. I am not tired. I couldn't sleep."

The man caught hold of her and she arose, backing away from him slightly. He leaned towards her, peering into her face, his teeth clenched and his green eyes narrowed.

"How much of this nonsense do you think I'm going to stand?" he rapped out sharply.

"Tom!"

"Eh, how much?"

Marie's head was turned from the man, her free arm across her face.

"I'll bet you didn't turn away this afternoon."

Marie wrenched herself free and flew towards the door. In a bound Tom was beside her, the struggling girl in his arms, his lips fastened on her mouth.

The door-bell pealed. Marie tore the door open. The Victorian Order nurse stood in the doorway.

"Miss Nelson," panted Marie, forcing a little laugh.

"Didn't you expect me, Mrs. Canning? I see your husband is home. I thought you would be alone again."

"Of course, I expected you," said Marie. "I had forgotten for the moment."

"You really don't need me," the woman still hesitated in the doorway.

"Oh, but we do, and your bag is here and everything. Of course, you will stay." She eagerly drew the woman into the room. "My husband was able to finish his business sooner than he thought, but he is very tired and is going to bed immediately. Take off your coat and hat."

Marie crossed the room and raised the blind. "It must be far below zero outside. See the moon, it looks so cold," she motioned to the nurse to join her. They stood a moment looking down in the street. A man, walking slowly by, looked up. Then Marie lowered the shade.

"You should try to get some rest yourself, Mrs. Canning," said the nurse, preparing to make up her couch.

"Not to-night." Marie shook her head and stepped softly into the little room where the baby lay. She closed the door and the key turned softly in the lock. Soon the little flat was in darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER the funeral, Tom drove Marie back to the little flat and left her. He had been drinking in his room the night before, and awoke in the morning sick and with shaking nerves. The nurse stayed with Marie when she saw the man's condition. At the funeral, the man had broken down, sobbing wildly, going completely to pieces, and the few neighbours who had gathered, noting the wife's cold aloofness, gave him all their sympathy. He had to be helped down to his car. Now he was calm again, but his nerves were still twitching. He could scarcely steer the car through the heavy traffic.

"I have to go back to Lethbridge to-night," said Tom, breaking their long silence.

Great waves of relief surged over the girl. *That* would be the solution of her problem. She had made no plans. She would not go back to the Girls' Club and face the barrage of questions that would be launched at her. She would be nagged and nagged at to return to her husband. These women would not understand that this was outside the realm of possibility. She would not go to Grange. Her pitiful situation was the result of her own doing, and she alone should bear the responsibility insofar as one can,

in this mixed-up world, where our acts are as pebbles dropped in a pool, whose ripples widen beyond our reach. She was causing enough misery to Tom and Grange as it was. Now, with Tom's going, she would have time to make plans, to secure work, perhaps leave the city altogether.

She glanced at Tom. He was a nervous wreck. She knew the terrific speed at which he drove on these nights to evade the law, the purring through the town, the roaring on the long, white stretches of the country; and the roads were slippery. The girl made a supreme effort.

"Tom, you should not go. You have been through so much. You are not fit for the journey."

"Do you want me to stay, Marie?" The man leaned eagerly from the wheel towards her.

"Oh, Tom," tears sprang to her eyes at the futility of it all. "Please let me go."

"How do you mean—go?"

"Oh, forget me, let us live away from each other. There can never be anything between us again; never. There never should have been. You have another woman; she is more your type. You have never had real happiness with me. Go to her, and let me go my own way."

"Your way! Is that to Houltain? Not in *this* world!" He slowed up at the crossing and then jammed the gears and tore along again.

"I want to work again, Tom, and we must separate. I will not go to Grange Houltain or anybody else if you will only leave me alone."

They drove up at the curb and Tom let Marie out of the car.

"I am going to load up," he said, pulling the door shut. "I'll be back for my things."

Marie hurried up to the flat. Feverishly she threw together her few belongings and some of the baby's little garments, and crammed them into a bag. Her mind was still not made up, and she seemed incapable of thought. The house was achingly empty. She longed to throw herself upon the bed and sob her very heart out in her loneliness, and she could not relax her vigilance for a moment. What would she do? She put on her hat and coat and paced the floor. If Tom would listen to reason, if he would go quietly now, she would promise to wait at the flat until he came back from Lethbridge. Then they would talk calmly of their future. Neither was fit to discuss it now; their nerves were raw.

Night closed in, clear, blue and cold. Marie did not turn on the lights. At length the car drove up and she knew by the scraping of the brakes that it was Tom's motor. She peered stealthily from the window, saw her husband lurch out of the car, sway a moment on the door, then straighten and shut it. He was drunk. Marie had seen Tom Canning drunk before. Catching up her bag, with the fleetness of a

deer she sped through the back corridors and out the tradesmen's entrance of the building. Racing along the lane, she came abruptly to the street and, turning sharply to the right, faced the Devenham. In her ears was still the sound of Tom's feet on the stairs, his curses as he stumbled. Marie crossed the road and passed through the gleaming doors of the big apartment house.

Grange answered her ring.

"Marie, my dear, I had almost given up hope." He led her in and took off her hat and coat, drawing her to the chesterfield that was in front of the crackling fire.

Marie had not spoken. She seemed to be in a dream. The soft oriental rugs, the books twinkling at her from the shelves, the dull shine of the furniture, the exquisite bits of bric-a-brac, and the paintings, they were all like a bit of Clovelly—like a bit of heaven to Marie. Her eyes drank in the warmth and beauty of it all. It coursed through her body like wine. And Grange! He stood there in front of her, eagerly bending to her. Grange, all to herself. Slowly, she raised her eyes and let them dwell long on his splendid figure, his bright hair, his kind eyes.

"Grange," a shuddering sob came up from her heart. "Take me, take me, Grange. Never let me go." He had her in his arms, caressing her, comforting her.

Long they sat silent, the very nearness of each other sufficing. At last they began to talk. Grange told her of his disappointment at not finding her at the station, of seeking her at the Club. He spoke of his visit to Mrs. Hearst, and their long conversation together; of his long night after he had learned of her marriage. Marie told of Gabriel's illness, of the family needs, pressing down on her at the time of his home-coming.

"I went to the hotel for you, Grange, and your mother said that you had gone to the train to meet Constance Howard. Oh, my dear, you held up your arms to her——"

The years slipped away. With every word came better understanding. At length Grange said, "What explanation did you make to your husband about leaving?"

Marie told of the night before, of her plea for freedom in the afternoon, and of Tom being drunk.

"I waited and waited, doing nothing for hours, and when I saw him, I ran to you. I suppose, subconsciously, I intended doing that all the time, otherwise I would have left the flat as soon as he drove away."

"Little Marie," groaned the man, "why did you marry him?"

"Why do so many of us, born free, walk into prisons of our own making?" she asked, helplessly. "Why do so many remain in prison, though the door

is unlocked and no one would intercept their going out. My dear, the world is full of that; so few of us are big enough for freedom. I entered my prison, and then, after a time, my baby barred the door. Now I am here. Grange!" Sudden alarm came into her voice. She caught his hands in a frenzy, clasping them to her soft throat as she looked into his eyes. "Does that matter to you? All that I have been through, all the ugly scars on my soul? Yesterday, I thought so, but to-day it seems that we must be together again. That only that was the true way of life for us. You are not sorry I came. You wanted me, Grange?" A world of entreaty was in her voice. Her deep blue eyes gazed into his as if to read his very soul. "Do other people matter; does anything matter as long as we are together again? Surely these long years have proven our love."

Because of all she had suffered, because of all that had been unlovely in her life, Marie was avid for Grange's love. Every experience had but gilded it. And because he was a man, even though his own experiences had been perhaps more sordid, less justified, he approached the situation with caution.

"Grange!" Her voice whipped out sharply, and she rose and moved away from him. "I should not have come."

She spoke quietly now, and went towards the chair where her hat and coat lay. At once, the man had

her in his arms again, vowing his love, entreating her forgiveness, silencing her with his kisses.

"You misunderstood my silence," he protested. "I was thinking of ways and means."

They sat down in front of the fire-place again. Marie was reassured.

"What shall we do?" she asked, humbly. "I thought perhaps I could just stay here and live with you, or we could go away."

Grange shook his head.

"It is not as easy as that, little Marie. If we are not married and live together, we are but entering another prison house, into which the world will not come to us. Even Mrs. Hearst and Frank, those dear, broad-minded friends, would not be quite the same. We must find some better way. One thing is sure and simple—I shall never let you go again. I have rejoined the Mounted Police, you know. What I would suggest is this; I am to be stationed at Calgary for a time. Fortunately, I kept on the apartment, because I wanted a place where I could get away from people occasionally. What a blessed retreat it will be now! You must live here. The housekeeper will look after you, and I shall explain everything to her. Canning, of course, will misread the whole thing and sue for divorce, and you, by not opposing it, will be able to keep the thing fairly quiet. If he does not, then you will have to sue for the divorce, and the housekeeper will be a valuable witness. It does not sound pleasant,

does it, sweetheart, but it is the best we can do. And now, my dear, I am going to have a talk with Mary and trot along. I shall 'phone you first thing in the morning. Don't go out. We shall go for a little run in the motor to-morrow evening if I am free."

For more than a month, Marie lived at Grange's apartment. She wrote to her mother, telling her of the baby's death, that she had left her husband, and that she would write again when her plans were more definite. It was a time of re-adjustment for Marie. She tried desperately to get back that healthy view of life which she had had at Clovelly, determined that the last few years should not cloud all her future. Terrible spells of longing for her baby would come to her, and she would face them squarely, telling herself that it was better so. Her fierce, and almost tragic love for the child, which was fostered by her secret sense of shame at his begetting, became a gentler, sweeter love. Often a smile hovered about her lips when she thought of him, of his loveliness, of his cunning baby tricks, his dancing eyes and fluttering hands when he beheld her.

Mary, the housekeeper, had accepted the change from master to mistress with private headshakings and reservations, but Marie's charm and beauty wore these quickly down, and she enjoyed mothering the girl. She had hardly known what to expect when Grange, deeming it wiser to take the woman into his confidence and enlist her loyalty, rather than have her exchange

surmises with her friends, had told her that Marie was to stay in the flat. However, the great discretion of the young people soon won her admiration and approval.

Grange was a devoted lover, forever telephoning or sending flowers and books. Marie's beauty shone again with all the glow of a woman well loved. Her sense of humor, so long dormant, awoke, and often her throaty laugh, which Grange so loved, was heard.

In the evenings, whenever possible, Grange would come to her. For the first time the man became aware of the extent to which she had enriched her mind, of her deep humanity and her sane, clear insistence on the truth in everything. Older, wiser, more experienced, they looked back on each other's younger selves almost as upon strangers, and gloried in the richer love they now had for each other. For hours, through the long evenings they would talk, then pausing, Marie would look up, become aware of her companion's hot look of love, and she would catch her breath and say quickly: "I shall make you some coffee now, Grange," and hurry to the little white kitchenette, leaving the man by the leaping fire. And the man would bury his face in the dent of the cushion that her dear bobbed head had made, and pray and fight for strength, for he knew her desire to be as strong as his own.

Came a night when conversation lagged and their faces in the firelight were shadowed and drawn. For

long minutes they would gaze into each other's eyes, and then look hastily away. At length the tortured man strode over to the girl.

"Marie," he stumbled, huskily. "Come, I can't—"

She was in his arms, their lips clinging, their kisses stabbing each other's souls, but even stronger than his passion was his chivalry. Marie had entrusted herself to him. Abruptly, he left her, and Marie's pillow that night was wet with the storm of her tears.

That evening was a warning to them. It opened their eyes to the necessity of definite action, for there was a danger in their happy drifting along together. Not a word had been heard of Tom Canning. One evening, Marie, mentioning him for the first time since her coming, said—

"Tom usually goes to Lethbridge on Thursdays, and is gone——"

"Don't, please, Marie," broke in Grange, sharply. "I don't want to hear anything of the fellow's doings from you."

Marie looked up, hurt amazement in her eyes.

"Your attitude is a little absurd, Grange," she said, quietly. "Last night we were discussing the advisability of applying for a divorce, since he seems to be taking no steps himself. I was just thinking aloud, wondering when he would most likely be in town. Won't my lawyers have to enter into communication with him?"

"I am sorry, dear," smiled the man. "I sounded like a jealous fool, didn't I? About the divorce—we'll leave that until next week. I am going to be frightfully busy for the next day or so."

All evening Grange was strangely preoccupied and left Marie early. That morning his chief had given him his first big job since he had rejoined the force. He was to "get that bootlegger Canning."

CHAPTER IX.

GRANGE HOULTAIN and his companion sat huddled in the big car. The night was desperately cold and still. The stars seemed to snap. A thin layer of snow, over roads and fields, gave a wan light to accustomed eyes.

"Start the engine again," said Grange, softly. "You'll have to keep it warmed up all the time."

"What makes you so sure that he'll come through this town?" asked his companion, as he shoved the spark, listening with practised ear to the hum of the motor.

"He is coming straight from The Crow's Nest," explained Grange Houltain. "He has a powerful car and will be going fifty miles an hour when we see him, but he'll slow up to go through the town. He will likely see us then. This old barn is a bit of protection. Then tear after him."

Silence again, broken now and then by the warming up of the engine. Grange thought of Marie and wondered if she would be expecting him to-night. If she could see him now! How would it end?

At length the great dome of the Alberta sky glowed with a light and, mounting the curve of the earth, two long shafts levelled in front of the watchers. The car

came on with a roar. Stealthily Grange threw his leg over the side of the car and crouched on the running board.

"What are you going to do? Shoot at his tires?"

Grange shook his head. "No, he's an ugly customer; he'll fire back."

"What if he does?"

"I don't want any guns on this job," said Grange, tersely.

"What the devil is wrong with you to-night?" asked his companion.

"You'll know all about that some day, I guess," laughed Grange, grimly. "When Canning comes up, chase after him and put on all the speed you've got. I am jumping onto his running board."

The engine started again, humming softly. Canning raced up, reducing his speed slightly, and the other car turned into the road. With a leap, the first car gathered speed and the race was on. The pursuing car gained ten feet, five feet; they were even. Like a cat, Grange was on the running board, his hand on the man's arm, making it impossible for Canning to get his gun that lay on the seat beside him. The mode of attack was unexpected. Glancing sideways, Canning saw who his captor was. With a snarl, he bent low over the wheel. Once more, with a roar, the car leaped forward. The dim light of the station came in view. Over the tracks they bumped. The high picket fence, like a line of huddled, skinny ghosts, lay ahead,

and beyond it some box cars and the cattle pens. The great motor lurched off the road. In a flash, Grange saw the man's idea and rolled into the car, his grasp never relaxing, just as the motor crashed through the palings and ground sideways along the corner of a box car, ripping and jarring the whole side and mudguards. The engine shuddered, the car heaved up and settled. Grange lay crumpled up a second, then rose, leaning tipsily for the car slanted. He was still grasping his captive's arm.

"Canning!"

There was a gasp—"Don't, don't touch——"
The man twisted and was still.

Grange Houltain peered over the back of the front seat and recoiled suddenly, relaxing his grasp.

Tom Canning sat pinned to the seat by a paling from the fence. It was not Grange Houltain this time who had "got" his man.

The other car came up and stopped. The driver, leaping to the road, called sharply.

"Here!" cried Grange, quickly. "Bring your flashlight. God, what a sight!" He motioned to the dead man in the car and turned away.

* * * * *

It had been a happy evening for Marie. So great was her love for Grange, so sure was she of his love for her, that even when he was not present she seemed enveloped in it. Sometimes it was good just to be

alone and bask in the warmth of it. She had read for a while, had done a little mending, and had gone to bed early, dropping into a heavy, dreamless slumber.

She was awakened by the sound of slow, heavy steps on the stairs in the outside passage. She switched on the light. The hands of Grange's little travelling clock pointed to five. Whoever it was had paused outside the door. Marie drew a sharp breath. The loud peal of the doorbell sounded from the kitchen. The girl's heart seemed to stand still, then race into her throat to choke her, thrumming against her ears. She became dizzy with fright. It must be Tom. She heard Mary's feet thump out on the floor, could hear her padding around.

"Mary," she whispered.

The woman came in and Marie, raising herself on her elbow, looked into eyes as frightened as her own.

"Mary, it is my husband."

"No, no; there, don't be frightened, I won't open the door."

The bell rang again, then there was a gentle knocking.

"Mary, it is Mr. Houltain," came softly through the door.

Marie dropped back, weak with relief, while Mary grasping the front of her dressing-gown, hurried to let Grange in. She stepped back at the sight of the man as he entered. His forehead had been bleeding where he had hit it against the robe rail of the car and the

blood had congealed on the wound. A great smudge of bloodstain showed itself greenish against his coat sleeve. His face was haggard.

"Mr. Houltain, whatever is it?"

Grange walked towards the fire, removing his hat and heavy coat. He saw the stained sleeve and, shuddering slightly, carefully placed it so that it would do no damage to the chair. He sat down close to the fire and, with a long sigh of exhaustion, lit a cigarette. Then he seemed to become conscious of Mary. She looked so unlike the Mary of every day, her thick, heavy braid that hung down her broad back seeming grotesquely youthful and jaunty. He wanted to talk to the old familiar Mary of the tight bob and the cameo pin. The man leaned forward and beckoned to the woman, who was still gazing at him in amazement.

"Mrs. Canning is in bed?" he asked softly.

Mary nodded. "But she's awake," she said, in a low tone. "She was that frightened. We thought it might be her husband."

"So I imagined; that is why I spoke. Mary, will you ask Mrs. Canning to get dressed and come out. I want to speak to her."

Mary nodded. "I'll get you a bit of something first, Mr. Houltain—a drink, perhaps?"

"Clever Mary," smiled the man. "That is what I need more than anything. A strong whisky and soda first of all."

Grange warmed his hands while the woman was getting the glass and bottle. The blood was melting on his forehead. He felt the wound, looked at his fingers, then tried to staunch the flow with his handkerchief. Mary came back with some sandwiches on the tray as well.

"I suppose I look like the wreck of the *Hesperus*," he said, trying to speak lightly. Mary, the capable, simply shook out a clean handkerchief and handed it to him. Grange felt better. It was the same old reliable Mary, despite that heavy braid.

"Mary," he almost whispered, and the woman leaned low to catch his words, "Tom Canning has just died. It is that which I must tell Mrs. Canning."

"Praise the Lord," the woman said softly, piously raising up both hands. "Now, could he have done anything better, I ask you?" She moved away to speak to Marie.

"Would to heaven Marie were no more complex than Mary," thought Grange.

"Yes, Mary, I am already dressed. I am coming at once," he heard Marie say and, crossing the hall, she stood at the door of the living-room.

"Grange!"

The man had risen at her entrance and, forgetting his slight wound, was startled at the alarm in her voice. She ran to him.

"My dear, you're hurt."

"Oh, that," said Grange. "No, it is really nothing more than a scratch."

"What has happened?" pleaded Marie. "Something has. Oh, Grange, what has happened *now*?"

Grange drew the girl over to the couch and they sat down. Marie turned sideways, sitting erect and facing him, every nerve alert.

"It is about Tom," said Marie, with conviction.

Grange nodded. "He was killed tonight, Marie."

Wide-eyed, Marie clutched at the man's shoulders, turning him to face her. "Grange—not—?"

"No, no, dear—an accident."

She dropped back among the cushions, weak with relief.

"Oh, Grange, I thought, just for a moment——"

Her breath began to come in little gasping sobs.

"Don't, dear, get a grip on yourself," said Grange, firmly. He took both her hands, holding them tightly in his, his eyes gazing into hers, steadying her.

"I am all right now," she said at length. "How did it happen, Grange?"

"He had been bootlegging, Marie. You knew that."

Marie nodded.

"I was sent out to-night to get him."

The girl's body snapped taut like a whip.

"Then there was something."

[Not a sound in the room. Mary, still padding about in the kitchen, sniffled. Then a fresh log,

settling in the fireplace, disturbed the silence as much as the falling of a tree in the forest. Both started.

"Grange, why did you?" wailed Marie, softly.

Slowly the man rose and began drawing on his coat. Marie stood up. He turned and, picking up his hat, moved to the door.

"Marie," he said sternly. "You say, 'How could you'. I ask you, how could I not. My chief sent me, and that is enough for me. Do you think that I wanted the job? That man came between us when he lived. You allowed him to do that. Now, if he is to separate us when he is dead, so be it. What I did, I would do again. A command is a command. I came to you to-night, at this hour, because I wanted you to know of his death before you saw the morning paper. I shall go now, and if you want me, you know where you can get me. I shall never come until you send for me."

"Oh-h—" that hurt, that broken cry. "Grange, forgive me. I know you could not have done otherwise. It was a cry, not against you, against, just—everything."

Grange turned quickly, and Marie was in his arms.

"Dear, I love you, you know that," cried the girl. "Nothing else matters. I know that you had to go."

They went and sat in front of the fire again. For a long time they were silent. Finally the man stirred.

"Well, I have planned everything," he said.

"How—everything?"

"For you, for me, for your mother, and your children, the little brood of yours out in the country."

Marie looked at the man gratefully. Grange continued.

"You must leave town in the morning. I shall wire Aunt Lol. She will be more than happy to have you. They are both settled in their new house at Vancouver now. I shall have to get a transfer. That won't be hard to arrange. They wanted me to go there when I joined again here, but I evaded the opportunity, even though it meant a promotion, because I wanted to be near you. I shall follow you out at Christmas time, and we shall be married then. About your family, we shall have to get Gabriel back, and a man to help him on the farm. Paul must get properly settled at a good school. You won't have a worry about your family, dear."

Marie's hand slipped into that of her lover, pressing it gratefully. He turned and looked at her, at her provocative little face, now so serious and sad.

"And we *will* be happy, won't we, Marie?" he pleaded.

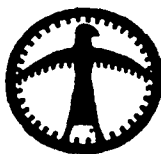
"My dear," the girl turned to him, her face suddenly aglow. "How can we help but find happiness? We are going to ride right into the sunset again."

THE END

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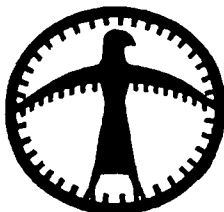
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